

“This is not about donkeys and elephants. This is about right and wrong.”

Examining frames of polarization in American political scandal reporting in the #MeToo era

Taru Inkinen

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Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Helsinki

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract</p> <p>American political culture has become increasingly polarized from the 1970s onwards. Among the many factors that have contributed to the rise of behavioral polarization between Democrats and Republicans is the emergence of partisan media. In this thesis, I compare the coverage of American liberal and conservative media of two political #MeToo scandals in the autumn of 2017: those of Republican Roy Moore and Democrat Al Franken.</p> <p>I conduct a quantitative and qualitative frame analysis of online media articles by CNN, Fox News, the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal from the first three days of each scandal. I find that liberal and conservative media differ in their coverage of the two events. First, they show differences in how they frame sexual harassment scandals. Second, the partisan leanings of the politicians seem to affect framing decisions and the volume of reporting.</p> <p>My findings are in line with recent research on behavioral polarization, and how partisan strength and disdain towards the opposing party may rise within a nation. Since partisan media tend to skew news topics to be more favorable to their own political leaning, people who subscribe to liberal outlets may form a very different understanding of political issues compared to those who follow conservative media.</p>			
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1. Introduction

Scandals have played a role in American politics ever since the nation's founding era. As early as in 1797, Alexander Hamilton, a Founding Father and the first Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, had the dubious honor of becoming the first American politician to become embroiled in a sex scandal. The reputation of this celebrated statesman was smeared in the public sphere after having an extramarital affair and recounting the dramatic events in a highly publicized pamphlet. (Chernow, 2004, 526–545.) There are enough examples from all stages of American political history to suggest that the widespread nature of political scandals is by no means a new phenomenon.

Still, as I will explain in the next section of my thesis, mediated political scandals, that were mere anomalies in the formative years of the country, have later become relatively common occurrences in American politics. The political media system in the United States has gradually become increasingly character-focused and thus also more scandal-prone from the late 20th century onwards. Even though the press has always shown interest towards the scandalous behavior of public figures, it was not until the 1960s that their public lives started to really make their way to the pages of newspapers (Thompson, 2000, 147). It is important to note that the prevalence of political scandals is not a uniquely American development, as the amount of political scandals has also skyrocketed in Finland and other Nordic countries during this century as a result of the media putting more light on politicians' misdeeds (Pollack, Allern, Kantola & Ørsten, 2018).

The past fifty years have been an age of profound political change in the United States in many respects. With growing polarization, bipartisan solutions are feared to be a thing of the past because members of the two major parties, Republicans and Democrats, have started to shift towards their own ideological corners and moderate centrist politicians have become rare in both camps (see e.g. Arceneaux & Johnson, 2015; Christenson & Weisberg, 2019; Iyengar, 2016). The widening rift between the two parties is not only affecting the decision-making process in Congress, it also shows in how ordinary Americans view each other. The animosity between Republicans and Democrats has only seemed to grow in the 2000s: according to a 2016 survey cited by Dino Christenson and Herbert Weisberg (2019), 40 percent of supporters in both political parties consider the other party's views detrimental to the nation's wellbeing.

In this thesis, I examine American political scandals through the lens of polarization, since I assess there being a connection between the two. During the past two years, in particular, we have seen a peak in powerful men being ousted from their positions as a result of sexual harassment scandals. The autumn of 2017 brought along a whole new category of scandals with the rise of the #MeToo movement, which urged women to come forward with their own stories if they have ever been sexually harassed. The movement was sparked on October 15, 2017 by a tweet published by actress Alyssa Milano, which brought on a storm of tweets by other women with similar experiences (Kindelan, 2017). Although the movement first seemed to only address the harassment experienced by the entertainment industry, it soon snowballed into a larger phenomenon that affected the political realm, media institutions and the business world alike.

As a result of rising awareness of workplace harassment and gender inequality, politicians and other public figures face a different world now than they did at the turn of the millennium. In the current climate, it would be difficult to imagine a situation in which a politician was accused of workplace sexual relations and the subordinate would be attacked in the same way that the White House intern Monica Lewinsky was in the 1990s. The Clinton–Lewinsky scandal, into which I will go in more depth in chapter 2, was largely based on media coverage that ridiculed and downplayed the situation, reveled on the explicit details of the affair and placed a lot of blame on the young intern, instead of on the misuse of power by the most powerful man on earth (Harris, 2018). The media frenzy around the scandal was revisited by many journalists in the aftermath of #MeToo revelations who finally realized that the media had missed the mark on their reporting and that allegations like this should not be taken lightly.

The surprise election of Donald Trump in November 2016 baffled many liberal media outlets, since they had not predicted it in their polls and assumed in their pre-election reporting that Trump's opponent, Hillary Clinton, would almost certainly be elected president. For instance, New York Times' prediction on Election Day showed Clinton having an 85% chance of winning (Katz 2016) while CNN's forecast predicted her odds of winning to be 91% just the day before the election (Kenny, 2016). The electoral win that a large part of media outlets could not anticipate caused a wave of self-reflection among journalists. The contrasting reporting in different media made it evident that there are

slants in reporting and inherent blind spots that can prevent journalists from recognizing the political developments in all of the country, not just in their own ideological corner.

The #MeToo scandals sparked a nationwide debate in the U.S. about whether sexual harassment has turned into a partisan issue in an increasingly polarized political culture. The editorial board of the New York Times argued that Republicans turn a blind eye on sexual misconduct (Editorial Board 2018), while Fox News has accused Democrats of only caring about victims of sexual harassment when the perpetrator is a Republican politician (Mikelionis, 2018). As someone who has followed American political news closely in recent years, I have noticed that sexual harassment news articles often relate to so much more than just sexual harassment. They usually deal with partisan differences in tackling this social issue and the hypocrisy arising from these differences. Thus, in addition to covering the facts and sexual harassment as a social and cultural issue, American media debate concerning #MeToo scandals has also largely focused on party politics and polarization.

This is why in my thesis, I will seek an answer to the following research question: **How do the media frames of American political scandals differ from one another on the basis of party lines and the ideological bias of media outlets?** I will name and describe the media frames that seem prevalent in sexual harassment reporting, after which I will analyze their differences in liberal- and conservative-leaning news outlets.

In the following chapter of my thesis, I will delve deeper into the concept of scandal, explain how scandals can be characterized, and present their role and importance in the recent political history of the United States. I will also provide some background information on the American media environment, which is required to fully grasp the unique nature of American political reporting when compared to Finland. American media is relatively open about the ideological biases present in their editorial pages and at times also in reporting. Some media are understood to be on the conservative and Republican side of the political spectrum, whereas others uphold more liberal values and seem to favor Democratic policies and politicians, and these differences are supported by a great deal of media research (see e.g. Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Levendusky, 2013).

The third chapter will introduce the theoretical framework of my thesis: behavioral polarization in the U.S. and how the partisan news media contribute to its existence. After this, I will describe the data and methods used in my work in the fourth chapter. I will examine two sexual harassment cases from the fall of 2017 when the #MeToo movement had just begun. The two politicians chosen for closer review are Roy Moore, a then-aspiring Republican candidate for U.S. Senate, and then-Senator Al Franken of the Democratic party. By analyzing the media reports of four news media with different kinds of presumed ideological biases, I will try to identify frames of polarization that the media use of the two candidates and determine whether the reporting varies based on the presumed ideologies of the media outlet and the politician. Since setting double standards for similar behavior for in- and out-party politicians is one crucial symptom of behavioral polarization (Mason, 2013), in my research, I will try to find out if they can be recognized in these two cases.

The fifth chapter will present the actual analysis of the data and response to the aforementioned research question. In the conclusion, I examine whether there are differences in reporting in conservative and liberal media outlets, try to make sense of what has caused them and what they say about American political culture as a whole. When Leeann Tweeden, the woman who accused Al Franken of having groped and kissed her without her consent, was interviewed on an ABC talk show *The View* about her experience, she denied the partisan nature of the issue by saying: “I’m not calling for [Franken] to step down. I think he’s done some great work, and this is not about donkeys and elephants, this is about right and wrong.” (Romano, 2017). By ‘donkeys and elephants’, of course, she refers to the party logos of Democrats and Republicans, respectively. My research will aim to determine whether what Tweeden claimed seems true: are sexual harassment scandals turned partisan in the media or not?

The seventh and final chapter of my thesis is reserved for discussion: in it, I consider the strengths and weaknesses of my research and provide possible themes for further research on the topics of political biases in American media and behavioral polarization.

2. Scandals reflecting American political life

2.1 Defining scandals

There are multiple ways to define a scandal, but few definitions are as thorough and more often cited as that of John B. Thompson (2000). In his conceptualization, he offers a broad range of criteria that help determine what constitutes a scandal. Firstly, a scandal needs to involve *a moral transgression* – meaning, that at the center of a scandal, there is always a value or norm that the subject of the scandal jeopardizes with their actions. Because ethical considerations and values that are held in high regard differ from country to country, a certain immoral action might cause the downfall of a politician in one country, whereas someplace else the same situation could leave another politician’s reputation completely unscathed. (Thompson, 2000, 13–18.)

Second of all, to meet the criteria of a scandal, the event needs to incite a *public response* after it is brought to light, and people need to disapprove of the act in question. Thirdly, the process of an event becoming public is integral to scandals. They always involve *an element of secrecy* because the person or people responsible in the scandal do not want the public to learn about their misdealings. Finally, scandals always involve *reputational risk*: although some politicians may be able to continue their careers as if nothing happened, scandals always have the potential to harm or destroy a person’s reputation. (Thompson, 2000, 12–19.)

When looking into the etymology of the word “scandal”, its roots can be traced back to the word *skandalon*, which was used in early Jewish and Christian traditions to refer to obstacles that put a person’s belief in God to the test. Comparably, in Latin, a similar-sounding word *scandalum* used to mean “sinful acts”. Although the word has later been stripped of its implicit religious meaning, Allern and Pollack (2012, 11) interestingly point out that scandals still relate to themes that have a lot in common with religions: shame, punishment and atonement lie at the very heart of scandals to this day.

One way to test whether a particular reputation-risking event can be considered a scandal is to assess its severity and scope. To make it easier for people to understand that types of situations can be labeled as scandals, Thompson (2000) provides an illuminating tool in his book. In his thought experiment, he

recommends the reader to imagine the term “scandal” to be used in defining two separate situations: 1) a politician receiving a speeding ticket and 2) an abhorrent crime against humanity, such as genocide. It is quite clear that even though both of these events are human-caused actions that go against societal norms, scandal is not the right word to describe them. In the first case, scandal would be too strong a term and in the second, it is conversely not nearly strong enough to grasp the severity of the crime (Thompson, 2000, 14).

Following this logic, scandals are the types of situations that fall somewhere between the aforementioned scenarios on the severity scale: it needs to be morally reprehensible enough to incite a public outcry, yet not something outright horrifying and criminal. Scandals can, of course, include criminal behavior, as exemplified by sexual harassment scandals.

This clear distinction has been somewhat challenged in recent years by, for instance, Ester Pollack, Sigurd Allern, Anu Kantola and Mark Ørsten (2018), who have studied political scandals in the Nordic countries in the past decade. They concluded that the term ‘scandal’ has recently suffered a kind of inflation, because trivial social media debacles tend to get framed as scandals and thus they are “elevated” into the position of being something more severe and worthy of attention than they actually are.

In summary, a scandal is an immoral act which is first concealed by the people involved, after which it is brought to the attention of a larger public – against the wishes of the subjects of the scandal themselves – which results in a public response and condemnation. Scandal is not merely the act itself but instead a process where the wrongdoing comes to light and it is constantly shaped by how people respond to it. Since scandals cannot be born without publicity, for hundreds of years, the media has played an integral role in creating scandals and keeping them alive (Thompson, 2000, 50–59). This is why media reporting provides a particularly interesting platform for scandal research.

2.2 The scandals that shaped American political history

The personal lives of ordinary politicians now carry more weight than in the previous century. The shift towards a personality-driven political system started to show in the 1970s and has only accelerated

after the turn of the century. During Richard Nixon's presidency, when members of the general public were allowed to vote in the preliminary elections for the first time, the media became more invested in the previously hidden personal lives of politicians. Prior to this, the party elites held the power in determining which candidate from their party would be at the top of the ticket. In an attempt to make voting easier and presumably also more interesting for ordinary citizens – who were less likely than party activists to be able to distinguish between same-party candidates – the media started to pay more and more attention to the personalities behind political titles. (Kantola, 2017, 70.)

Political science scholars have found different ways of classifying political scandals. John B. Thompson, for example, has grouped them into three categories: power scandals, sexual-political scandals, and financial-political scandals (Thompson, 2000, 120–121). Richard Nixon's infamous Watergate scandal is perhaps the best known example of a power scandal in American political history. The scandalous chain of events was started in the summer of 1972 when people tied to Nixon's re-election campaign broke into the Democratic National Committee headquarters in order to plant listening devices in their office. While this act alone was unethical enough, Nixon went to great lengths to cover up his actions: he directed CIA to block the FBI investigation into the scandal. Prior to this, he had also used the powers of his office to spy on political opponents. The whole scandal reached its culmination point two years later, in the summer of 1974, when the House Judiciary Committee passed articles of impeachment for Nixon's obstruction of justice and contempt of Congress, among other things. The impeachment proceedings never made it past the committee, because in early August of 1974, Nixon made the historic decision to resign as a result of this scandal and became the first American president thus far to do so. (Kantola 2017, 68–75.)

The media played a vital role in revealing Nixon's unethical behavior to the public (Kantola, 2017, 70). The unyielding investigative reporting by *The Washington Post* during the Watergate scandal still serves to this day as a prime example of media fulfilling its duty as a watchdog against people in power. This type of coverage is often an idolized and respected kind of scandal journalism (Allern & Pollack, 2012, 9–10), as opposed to the way in which media sometimes linger on more trivial matters of politicians that have little to no effect on their work.

In the 1990s, another well-known presidential scandal shook the country when the affair of the Democratic President Bill Clinton and a 22-year-old White House intern Monica Lewinsky became public. The president tried to conceal the relationship at first, but to no avail – after DNA evidence proved the sexual nature of their relationship, Clinton was forced make a confession to the public (Kantola, 2017, 275–277.) As is the case with many other scandals, Clinton’s situation was made worse by his initial cover-up attempts and lies (Thompson, 2000, 156). Although the scandal still lingers in his legacy, it did not put an end to his career. The majority Republican House of Representatives voted to impeach Clinton for perjury and obstruction of justice, but he was acquitted in the Senate trial that followed. (Kantola, 2017, 279.)

Again, the press coverage of the scandal was immensely important. Recent analyses of the scandal have shown that instead of focusing on the wrongdoings and misuse of power by President Clinton, the media at the time placed a disproportionate amount of attention and blame on Lewinsky. She became a common topic of political comedy and everything about her life, from her sexual history to her clothing decisions and family, became a subject of public scrutiny. (Everbach, 2017.)

The term of the current president of the United States, Donald Trump, has also been filled with scandals. During the 2016 election and his subsequent presidency, Trump has been faced with a plethora of sexual harassment accusations and said many scandalous things in public – among them the leak of the infamous Access Hollywood tape, in which he bragged about sexually harassing women. Yet, none of these scandals have lead to Trump’s resignation or any other major political consequences. Response to scandals has not always been this partisan, as Iyengar, Lelkes, Levendusky, Malhotra & Westwood (2019, 143) point out: during the Watergate scandal, Nixon was universally disapproved by Democrats and Republicans alike.

In the current era of heightened political polarization, it seems impossible to imagine a bipartisan front turning against President Trump and removing him from office through impeachment, as nearly happened for Nixon before he announced his decision to resign (Kantola, 2017, 68–71). In late 2019, Trump was actually impeached by the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives, but eventually the majority Republican Senate voted to acquit him by a nearly unanimous decision. With only one

exception, all Senators stuck to the party lines, which is a prime example of how polarization works in practice.

While Thompson's three-fold classification is useful and still holds water despite being published 20 years ago, it is not an exhaustive list nor did he intend for it to be one (2000, 123). One of its shortcomings is that it does not include a fitting category for sexual harassment, which has become an all too common theme of moral transgression in the past few years. A better-suited classification for the scandals that I examine, then, is provided by Sigurn Allern, Anu Kantola, Ester Pollack, and Mark Blach-Ørsten (2012). They have replaced the sex scandal category with a broader one that relates to all kinds of unacceptable personal behavior, including sex scandals, such as when politicians engage adultery or sexual affairs with prostitutes, but it also includes accusations of sexual harassment as well as drug and alcohol abuse.

The classification by Allern et al. (2012) is broader in other respects as well, as it divides political scandals into six categories instead of three: the aforementioned unacceptable behavior, offences in economic affairs, offences concerning other laws and regulations, abuses of power, unacceptable talk, and other types that are not included in this list. As sexual harassment cases should never be confused with consensual sexual affairs, they should not be viewed through the lens of a sex scandal either. Thus, unacceptable personal behavior seems to be a better umbrella term for the harassment scandals that will be analyzed in this thesis.

According to Allern et al. (2012, 38), behavior-related scandals have become more prevalent in Finland and other Nordic countries in the past decade, which is a signal of two developments: first, the media has become more interested in the private dealings of politicians and second, sexist behavior is no longer as readily tolerated as in decades past.

Another possible classification for the scandals analyzed in the latter sections of this thesis is a so-called #MeToo scandal. As I previously described, the #MeToo phenomenon was incited by a single tweet that encouraged women to share their personal experiences of sexual harassment in public to shed light on the issue. The tweet gained traction and during 2017, #MeToo grew into a worldwide

movement that had serious repercussions for the careers of politicians and other public figures in many countries, including Sweden and Norway. (Pollack et al., 2018.)

What is distinctive about these #MeToo scandals is that in many of the cases that have become public, the sexual harassment accusations date back many years and may therefore not be ongoing (Pollack et al., 2018), but only after the social movement has emerged around the issue, have the cases been finally afforded the needed weight and attention. Sexual harassment scandals in the wake of #MeToo have not been a topic of much research, which is why I deemed it necessary to take a closer look at how they have been depicted in the media.

2.3 Liberal and conservative media in the U.S.

Political scandals are a common research theme that combines media studies and political science, and news articles are very useful data for examining what kind of meanings and value positions are built of particular scandals. It could also be argued that scandal research is nearly impossible to do without taking a look at the media coverage of the events, because scandals are by and large created by the media. When a politician engages in unethical acts, it does not automatically become a scandal on its own – it requires the public’s attention and condemnation, which does not happen without someone breaking the news.

The roots of American scandal journalism can be traced back to the late-nineteenth century yellow journalism and the two competing newspapers of that era, *New York Journal* by William Randolph Hearst and *New York World* by Joseph Pulitzer. The business idea behind these two papers was to spread sensational news with attention-grabbing headlines and stories based on rumors in order to secure sales. (Carey, 2016.) The turn into a more professional type of journalism also took place around this time with “muckraker” journalists and the emergence of investigative journalism directed at the people in power. According to Thompson, many concurrent shifts in the 20th century journalism propelled the birth of mediated scandals: the growth of the media industry as a whole, the new emphasis on attracting readers with entertaining news pieces and storytelling as a tool in accelerating competition, and the overall increase in media visibility for public figures with the emergence of new forms of media. (Thompson, 2000, 57–59).

The role of journalists covering these stories is not limited to taking a bystander's role and simply revealing information to the general public. On the contrary: they have an active role in steering the scandal and determining how much the debacle is given air time or space in the newspapers (Allern & Pollack, 2012, 9–10). All their framing decisions matter in how the events are perceived by the public and how big of an effect it has on the people involved in the scandal.

In order to get a better understanding of the media outlets researched for this thesis, I briefly introduce them and explain their distinctive ideological slants on the basis of previous research. Especially conservatives tend to blame the American media for its liberal bias and especially the largest national outlets – the so-called mainstream media – are often at the center of these accusations (Entman, 2010; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). The themes of ideological bias and slant are often brought up when discussing American media, which is why I deem it necessary to explain the alleged biases in different media outlets before introducing the data that I use for my research.

Even though slant and bias in media often get confused with each other, there is a clear distinction between the two concepts, as emphasized by Robert Entman (2010). When a particular media outlet reports on one side's preferred frame in a political conflict in a disproportionate way and simultaneously ignores the other side, it is an example of slanted reporting. Bias, on the other hand, refers to slant that remains consistent over a long period of time. Entman (2010) divides media bias into two sections: content bias and decision-making bias. Content bias occurs when a media outlet publishes consistently slanted framing that promotes the success of a specific interest, party, or ideology (392–393) – for instance, if a liberal news outlet continuously downplays scandals by Democratic politicians while grabbing onto every mishap made by a Republican. Decision-making bias, then, comes into question when the personal ideological beliefs of journalists affect reporting, the existence of which journalists themselves tend to deny but which nonetheless also has an influence on the news content that is produced (Entman, 2010, 393–394).

The media outlets I have chosen for closer review in this research are *Fox News*, *CNN*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. It is, within the scope of my thesis, impossible for me to conduct research on consistent biases in the media outlets from which I have gathered my data. Therefore, I will

not attempt to research the biases by myself, but instead draw on existing media bias research from the United States to introduce the four media outlets used in my research.

2.3.1 Fox News

The golden age of partisan cable television was started by Fox News in 1996, as it was the first partisan news channel of its kind. The conservative and pro-Republican bias of Fox News is not only universally recognized in the American political system, but also widely supported by research (see e.g. Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Levendusky, 2013). Their consistent bias towards conservative ideology has been well documented by studies that have, for instance, shown a disproportionate favoring of Republican candidates in Fox News' scandal reporting (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009, 22–23).

Fox News has been referred to as a partisan media outlet that offers its viewers a consistently conservative view of the world, with political commentary being one of the channel's key products. The Democratic party has its own equivalent in MSNBC whose liberal bias is also very openly acknowledged, which is why the channel is often used as a counterpart for Fox News in bias research. (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2015; Levendusky, 2013.)

2.3.2 CNN

During the rise of partisan cable television in the 1990s, MSNBC and CNN entered the scene as well to introduce journalistic content from the liberal-leaning angles. According to Arceneaux and Johnson (2015, 316), at first the two new channels wanted to introduce balance and a broad range of political views in their reporting, but eventually MSNBC started to lean further to left in the beginning of the 2000s.

During the past decades, CNN has also become widely perceived by Americans as a liberal-leaning outlet: according to a 2004 study, 35% of Americans consider Fox News to be a conservative-leaning outlet and 26% of them can recognize a liberal bias in CNN's reporting (Turner, 2007). Another study has been conducted to research the partisan reading differences between Fox News, CNN, NPR and BBC. The results supported the idea that the media consumption habits of Americans are divided over

political views: Democrats and liberals favored CNN and NPR and avoided Fox News in an experimental setting, while Republicans and conservatives clearly preferred news by Fox. (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009.)

Both MSNBC and CNN would have provided an interesting set of data for my research, but the reason I opted for CNN is that their online news site provided more coverage of the Franken and Moore cases. MSNBC seems to be more strictly a television channel with only limited amount of online news, whereas CNN actively produces online news in addition to airing TV news around the clock.

2.3.3 The New York Times

Both The New York Times (NYT) and The Wall Street Journal have been grouped in previous research into the genre of so-called prestige press, which means that they are one of the nation's largest and most respected newspapers in terms of their circulation and influence (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004). NYT has also been called "the paper of record" (Wagner & Collins, 2014, 758), which refers to its esteemed status in the American media environment. When assessing the bias of the New York Times, previous research clearly suggests that the editorial pages (Wagner & Collins, 2014) and even the news stories of the New York Times lean towards liberal values (Groseclose & Milyo, 2005).

2.3.4 The Wall Street Journal

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) is a newspaper that focuses mainly on business and the economy, but also covers general political news and world affairs. The editorial page and the opinion content of the paper went through drastic changes after 2007, when it was acquired by *News Corporation*, a media conglomerate founded by Rupert Murdoch. Although scholars have debated whether the owner of a media outlet plays a role in its journalistic direction, a 2014 study seems to suggest that WSJ has shifted further to the political right in recent years. Under the new ownership, the paper has become increasingly negative towards Democratic politicians. The paper has established its position as a conservative news source over the past decades. (Wagner & Collins, 2014.) The conservative bias of the WSJ editorial pages seems to be rather universally accepted, while the news stories have been described as liberal-leaning (Groseclose & Milyo, 2005).

2.4 Prior frame analysis research of sexual harassment

There are some prior examples of analyzing sexual harassment news to recognize broader reporting conventions. A 2013 discourse analysis study (McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013) found four discourses that are typical in sexual harassment news stories, of which by far the most common was an individual aberration – that is, when the media frames a case of sexual harassment as a one-off occurrence devoid of any societal context. A systemic framing was the second most widely used and it describes stories where sexual harassment is understood as a broader symptom of the culture, like a workplace, in which it is encountered. Other, less common discourses related to gender inequality, which was present in news related to disadvantage and the sexualization of women or men in society, as well as techno-legal issues (news about the laws governing sexual harassment).

Abigail Saguy (2003, 73–95) has also analyzed frames in press reactions to sexual harassment in the 1990s after four major harassment cases, of which the best known ones are the harassment of Paula Jones by President Bill Clinton as well as the workplace sexual harassment scandal of Clarence Thomas, a Supreme Court nominee and later a Supreme Court judge. By comparing how French and American media handled the issues, Saguy was able to detect following types of media frames for sexual harassment (Saguy, 2003, 73–95):

- 1) One typical way to frame sexual harassment is to view it as **a social problem or a women's issue**. According to Saguy (2003, 80), 34 percent of American media coverage of sexual harassment during 1991–2000 described sexual harassment as a social problem and 42 percent as behavior that uniquely affects women. These frames appeared often in the same articles.
- 2) **Political frame** was the most prevalent one in the reporting analyzed by Saguy, which was understandable because in the cases she researched, the men accused of harassment or misconduct were all high-profile public figures (Saguy, 2003, 77). This led to media reports that focused on the political repercussions and the future careers of the men in the midst of these scandals.
- 3) **A scandal frame** was used often in the 1990s harassment cases researched by Saguy, and in many cases coexisted with the political frame.

- 4) A **legal frame** was used when media reported on legal consequences of sexual harassment and changes in the legal system as a result of improved awareness.
- 5) A **power frame** was used by the media to define sexual harassment as abuse that was enacted by those in power against the vulnerable, and the power of men over women.
- 6) A **discrimination frame** was used in media reports that acknowledged sexual harassment to be a form of employment discrimination, which was a relatively new idea in the 1990s.

The 1990s were a defining era for sexual harassment awareness: as Saguy (2003, 75–76), notes, throughout the decade, media coverage on sexual harassment showed a clear spike when compared to the numbers in the 1970s and 1980s. The categorization by Saguy (2003) as well as that of McDonald and Charlesworth (2013) are helpful tools for recognizing and naming media frames for sexual harassment in late 2010s as well. It will also allow me to assess whether the discussion has evolved at all since the 1990s upon entering the post-#MeToo era.

3. News media as an amplifier of polarization

3.1 Polarization in behavior and views

As I have previously described, the very first signs of a new kind of political environment, which is both more personality-driven, partisan and polarized, started to show in the 1970s. Many scholars seem to agree that the process was helped along by the emergence of partisan media and cable news stations, such as Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC in the 1990s – not to mention the overarching influence of the Internet on creating echo chambers and allowing for even more selectivity in information seeking than ever before. (Arceneaux & Johnson 2015, 309–310; Iyengar & Hahn 2009, 34.) These developments in the media ecosystem have helped along the process of polarization in the United States in the past twenty to thirty years.

Polarization has become an oft-cited buzzword which is often used to explain the so-called culture wars and the lack of bipartisanship, but it can be difficult to pinpoint what increased polarization exactly means. In order to combat this vagueness, Liliana Mason (2013, 141–142) has distinguished between two types of political polarization: *issue position polarization* and *behavioral polarization*. She argues

that polarization has indeed increased in the United States, but only in the latter meaning of the term. Issue position polarization occurs when the electorate shifts from moderate to more extreme views and become increasingly committed to their stances. Behavioral polarization, on the other hand, refers to a process where levels of partisan strength, partisan bias, activism, and anger towards the other party increase within a nation.

The latter type of polarization has also been called *affective polarization*. The two terms essentially refer to the same phenomenon where people feel more aligned with their own political group and more distant from the opposing group. Affective polarization can be described as a development in which people will start to dislike and distrust the opposing party. In the case of the United States, this means that Republicans will regard Democrats as partisan, hypocritical and selfish, and vice versa. There has been a nearly constant upward trend in affective polarization in the 2000s, with only a slight decrease from 2012 to 2016, which was explained by weaker in-party affections than before. (Iyengar et al., 2019.)

In the past decade, behavioral polarization has shown in the United States in stronger partisan affiliations and identities as well as in how people think more favorably of their own party, while seeing the opposing party and its supporters in a more negative light. Interestingly, this can lead to hypocrisy in the political system, because behavioral polarization causes people to hold their own party in higher regard, even in situations where two people from opposing parties are guilty of a similar misdeed. (Mason, 2013, 141–142.) This is an especially relevant insight for the purpose of this research, since my aim is to establish whether there are double standards in scandal reporting for politicians of the two major American parties.

There is enough research (e.g. Iyengar et al., 2019; Mason, 2013) to suggest that political opinions of the general public are, in fact, not drifting further apart from each other and becoming more extreme on both sides – only the gap between the two partisan groups has grown wider. In fact, although the identities of Americans are more strongly shaped by their partisan affiliation than before, Mason (2013, 155) argues that this has not shown in their issue positions, as they have remained rather moderate.

This idea has, however, also been challenged in recent years by Thomas Carsey and Geoffrey Layman (2015), among others. They argue that issue polarization has indeed increased, at least when it comes to questions of abortion and the role of government in ensuring jobs, engaging in affirmative action towards African Americans and providing jobs for citizens. The question of whether voters are more ideologically polarized seems to be a matter of constant debate, but hardly any scholars have questioned the existence and growth of affective polarization (Iyengar, 2016, 220). It is difficult to determine whether these two forms of polarization coexist or if one of them shapes the political system more powerfully, but I will leave those considerations for others.

Drawing from this useful distinction, whenever I discuss political polarization in the U.S. in the remainder of my thesis, I am referring to this type of behavioral or affective polarization. Behavioral polarization by Mason is a slightly broader conceptualization, as it includes the hostility felt towards the opposing party, but is not limited to that. The two concepts are both useful and manage to grasp something essential of the current political climate in the United States.

3.2 Is the media to blame for polarization?

For decades, the issue of whether or not partisan media causes polarization and if it does, to what extent, has been debated by academics. There is evidence to suggest that partisan media do have an influence on the Americans who are already polarized and politically active, and thus make them even more susceptible to extreme views (Levendusky, 2013). The partisan channels do not turn centrists into strict partisans, but bring those on the far-right and far-left even further from each other towards their respective ideological leanings. Partisan media tend to publish journalistic content that favors their preferred party while ignoring or downplaying news that are harmful for their agenda (Levendusky, 2013, 612).

People seem to prefer information that reinforces their existing beliefs, which is why partisan media content can be so compelling. In an era where the media environment is more abundant than ever before, selecting a media diet suited to one's taste has never been easier. In addition to traditional network television, there are partisan cable news channels, talk radio, newspapers and, perhaps most importantly, Internet and the enormous number of media outlets that it offers. (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009.)

The possibility to self-select media content to a greater extent means that there can be dramatic differences in how people come to see the surrounding world. If, for instance, someone mainly watches political commentary talk shows from Fox News and reads their news from the alt-right website Breitbart, the reality they are subjected to is completely different than the one you would get from the New York Times or MSNBC.

Still, it seems that the polarized political system in the U.S. is not created solely by the news media – rather, it only seems to add to the polarization which is already prevalent in American politics. As Arceneaux and Johnson (2015, 309) have aptly depicted, the “emergence of partisan news media is more a symptom of a polarized political system than a cause”. It would be far too simplistic to say that the media alone could cause polarization within an otherwise non-polarized nation. Still, the partisan media do have a tendency to support extreme views and argue on current events using talking points of the party they sympathize, instead of building bridges towards bipartisanship and a wider understanding of the world.

Although the media content of partisan news channels might boost polarization, it is not alone to blame. Researchers have alluded to various causes for this political development, such as the rise of income equality, shifts in demographic patterns, globalization (Duca & Saving, 2016) and the revolutionary force of information technology in creating a fragmented media environment (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). It has also been argued that presidents as highly partisan figures and election campaigns have played a major role in driving polarization in the United States from the 1980s onwards (Wood & Jordan, 2018). What this ambiguity suggests is that polarization cannot be traced back to a single contributing factor, such as the emergence of partisan media. It is instead affected by these multiple overlapping trends. Also, polarization within the American nation does not seem to show signs of slowing down. Quite the contrary – after President Trump’s election in November 2016, the electorate has been defined as hyperpolarized for having reached an extreme level of party polarization (Iyengar, 2016).

As argued by Arceneaux and Johnson (2015), the news media does not seem to *cause* polarization, but the media content they publish does have the ability to influence public opinion and deepen the political divide in an already polarized nation. In the latter part of my thesis, I will try to examine these

biases in reporting and determine whether the subject of sexual harassment has turned into a polarizing subject that divides opinions over party lines.

4. Data and methods

4.1. Media content used in the research

As I have previously argued, scandals and political polarization are both amplified by the news media. When taking this into account, media content should be fruitful ground for the base of my research. In the next section, I will delve deeper into select American news media – CNN, Fox News, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal – to analyze if scandal reporting differs based on the media outlet and the partisan affiliation of the politician involved and if it does, in what respect.

I examine an equal number of both liberal and conservative outlets, in order to compare if the two sides of the political spectrum depict cases of sexual harassment in a similar way or if they seem partial to the politicians of one party over another. Following the introductions provided in the second chapter of my thesis, I group Fox News and the Wall Street Journal into the conservative-leaning category, while I consider CNN and the New York Times as liberal-leaning media outlets. Even though there is no definitive proof that these media are consistently biased ideologically, they have been subjected to allegations of bias that have also been supported by previous research (see e.g. Arceneaux & Johnson, 2015; Groseclose & Milyo, 2005; Levendusky, 2013; Wagner & Collins, 2014). These existing perceptions of biases serve as a starting point for my frame analysis, which will then allow me to assess whether said biases can be recognized in the #MeToo reporting.

I also include an equal number of political news channels and national newspapers in my research data – two of each – to ensure that both of these prominent media formats can be compared. Even though television news and talk shows are the main product of CNN and Fox News, I have chosen to only focus on their written reporting instead of their television news pieces, because that allows me to compare the framing choices of all the four outlets in a similar way.

Although political commentary programming is the very cornerstone of cable channels, I have omitted these talk shows on Fox News and CNN and focus purely on textual content in my research. As we already know where the opinion show hosts are expected to stand ideologically, I find it more interesting to learn about whether the partisan or ideological divides spill over to the content that is meant to abide by journalistic standards, such as balance and objectivity. However, to include a certain frame of reference to analyze the differences in these media between the purely journalistic content and opinion pages, my frame analysis also takes op-eds, letters to the editor and editorials into account. Because newsrooms do not necessarily have a lot in common with the opinion pages of their outlets, I analyze these two sub-groups separately.

In order to get a more comprehensive look into whether there are recognizable political biases in reporting, I deemed it necessary to conduct a quantitative analysis of a broad set of data. I analyze the tone of news articles covering the Franken and Moore scandals during the first three days after the sexual harassment allegations had come under public scrutiny. The reason for selecting three days as the researched time period is to analyze the initial reactions of the press and their first instincts on how to report on these matters. Usually after the first few days mediated scandals tend to slow down if there are no new developments, or the media move on to broader topics relating to the scandal by taking a more analytical approach.

The sexual assault accusations against Roy Moore were first publicized by the Washington Post on November 9, 2017, so the articles chosen for analysis were written between November 9 and 11. Leigh Corfman, now 53, revealed that Roy Moore had sexually harassed her in 1979 when he was 32 years old and she was only fourteen. Three other women also accused Moore of having made unwanted advances towards them and asked them out on dates when they were teenagers and Moore in his thirties. When the allegations were brought to public attention, Moore was in the midst of a special election to fill an Alabama senate seat to the United States Congress, which he ultimately lost to his opponent, the Democrat Doug Jones. Moore's victory was long considered inevitable in a deeply conservative and Republican state, but the allegations leveled against him ended up costing him the Senate seat.

As for Al Franken, the analyzed time period for his sexual harassment scandal is November 16–18, 2017. At that time, it was revealed in the media that back in 2006 Franken, a then-comedian who later became the Democratic senator of Minnesota in 2009, had groped and kissed a radio host by the name of Leeann Tweeden without her consent. The harassment had taken place before Franken's political career, on a trip to entertain American troops abroad, which both Tweeden and Franken had attended as performers.

During these periods, the media coverage of these two scandals amounted to 149 articles in New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Fox News and CNN. I exclude all the video clips, but include all other content from the analyzed time periods: journalistic news, editorials, op-eds and letters to the editor. For reasons of accessibility, I am merely taking into account the articles that can be found on the online sites of these media outlets. The total amount of coverage regarding the Al Franken accusations was 78 (Appendix A) and on Roy Moore, 71 (Appendix B), within the first three days of these mediated scandals.

4.2. Frame analysis

The primary research method of my thesis is frame analysis, which allows me to analyze the journalistic decisions behind the news articles. The core idea of this method is to dig deep into the decisions, whether conscious or unconscious, that have shaped sexual harassment reporting. As explained by Robert Entman (1993), framing essentially delves into the power of text to influence human consciousness. He defines framing as a process wherein a communicator selects and highlights some aspects of reality while excluding other ones or making them less salient – which then forms the defined problems, solutions, and moral judgments within the text. One crucial way in which frames influence the mind of the reader is by helping to recognize problems and their roots, while leaving out other potential explanations. (1993, 51–57.)

The framing power of media is essential to understand because these reporting conventions have a real effect on the public opinion and how complex issues are understood and interpreted. Frames always include some amount of simplification and reduction, as they turn a complicated, multifaceted issue into one that has a couple central aspects at the most. (de Vreese, 2014.) Frames are an integral tool for

journalists who simply cannot cover each and every aspect of a story. Some selection and prioritization needs to happen so that the news can be compressed to fit their media formats.

Several frames can coexist in one news article, as noted by Saguy (2003, 79) – and they often do – but I have decided to choose only one prevalent frame for each article to make reduce noise in the observations. For instance, one article can discuss both the truthfulness of the allegations against Moore, while also reflecting the possible political consequences [1]. In these types of cases, I have assessed which frame is given priority and the most space in the article, and then link the article only into the frame that seems predominant. This is ultimately decided by how much space is given to any given topic within the article, which issues are highlighted in the headline and the first paragraphs, and who get to have their say in the articles.

The tone of reporting is established by the use of descriptive and loaded language, and by weighing the cited sources and seeing whose opinions are prioritized – that is, who gets to define the narrative and whose comments are only mentioned in passing or omitted. As is customary in frame analysis, I look into what was regarded as the central problem in each of the articles: sexual harassment as a systemic phenomenon or as a women's issue, political repercussions for the candidate, the individual abusers themselves, or something else.

In addition to analyzing the content of articles, one way to assess whether media considers a particular issue important or not important is by looking into the sheer volume of written articles. By comparing the amount of news reports of Franken's and Moore's scandals and analyzing their coverage frequency in four media outlets, we can get more information on how salient these sexual harassment cases are to these media. While the number of articles alone does not give an extensive understanding of one media outlet's reporting priorities, let alone their biases, it is one indicator that helps in analyzing their reporting decisions. If a liberal-leaning newspaper scrutinizes the sexual harassment of a Republican in dozens of articles while a similar case by a Democrat goes unreported, it should raise some questions about that media outlet's journalistic standards.

The selected journalistic frames allow me to determine which issues the journalists have brought to the center. Do they seem to be putting majority of the blame on the men accused of sexual harassment, the

overall culture that is allowing sexual harassment to happen, on the victims, the opposing political party or on something else?

4.3 Research philosophical approach

Frame analysis relies on the idea that the reality portrayed in the media is shaped by the ever-shifting journalistic decisions. Our understanding of reality is largely shaped by media representations that help us make sense of unfolding complex events. Journalists actively shape our understanding of facts and reality by their reporting, instead of merely publicizing information of commonly agreed-on facts, which we then as consumers of news digest and analyze individually. As the meanings and reality conveyed by the media are formed in social interaction, it makes sense to use social constructionism as my research philosophical approach. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann are among the best known theoreticians of social constructionism and sociology of knowledge. In their book called *The social construction of reality* (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, 49–65) they argue that social interaction and language are key elements in forming the reality of everyday life as the most important sign systems.

Social constructionism challenges the fundamental idea undergirding sciences such as physics and biology: that through observation, scientific facts are objectively revealed to researchers and the perceived reality is the same as actual reality. The idea of an objective reality is questioned in social constructionism and it encourages people to challenge conventional assumptions of the world. It also entails the idea that knowledge is formed in social interaction and that language is a constructive force in society, which is also the central focus of frame analysis. There is also an inherent understanding in social constructionism that cultures and societies tend to shape their own realities differently. (Burr, 2015.)

The same is true in American #MeToo reporting: the frame analysis I conduct is based on journalistic text produced by different individuals, with their own motives and backgrounds, which I then analyze in their specific historical and cultural context. This research only allows me to study and analyze the meanings found in these texts, but it does not make it possible for me to make any broader generalizations. Therefore, the new knowledge acquired in my thesis falls under the realm of

relativism, where an external and commonly shared perception of reality is unreachable, instead of realism (Burr, 2015, 26).

5. Analysis

This chapter is divided into two separate parts, as my research is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods. In sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, I explain the findings of the quantitative frame analysis. In section 5.1, I compare the total numbers of scandal coverage in the four media and also shortly introduce the eight sexual harassment frames, which I will further elaborate in section 5.4, which is reserved for the qualitative frame analysis.

I analyze the frequency of each frame in the news articles in section 5.2, while section 5.3 focuses on the quantitative frame analysis of the opinion articles.

5.1 #MeToo news in numbers

In this section, I present the findings of a quantitative frame analysis based on the 149 news pieces gathered by analyzing and grouping the articles into categories based on their framing decisions. The goal is to determine how these four media discussed sexual harassment allegations and whether these framing decisions were consistent despite the partisan affiliations of the politicians involved.

However, in the table below (Table 1) it can be seen that the differences in the amount of reporting are not that dramatic. I have listed the number of articles about Franken and Moore and shown how much the media wrote about them in the first three days of the scandals. Fox News and CNN covered these topics most extensively out of the four outlets, with CNN coming first with 52 articles. Both of the harassment cases were covered extensively and given a nearly equal amount of attention by CNN: there were 27 articles of Roy Moore and 25 of Al Franken. Similarly, the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal covered Roy Moore and Al Franken to an exact equal extent. Fox News' online edition, however, showed the most striking differences when it comes to the amount of published articles: they

published as many as 28 articles about Al Franken, while Roy Moore’s scandal was mentioned during its first three days only 19 times.

Table 1: Amount of media coverage in the Al Franken and Roy Moore scandals

Number of media articles about Al Franken's and Roy Moore's sexual harassment scandals in the fall of 2017 in the three days after each scandal broke.

Subject	Type	Media outlet			
		Fox News	CNN	NYT	WSJ
A: Al Franken (D)	Journalistic	24	19	13	3
	Opinion	4	6	6	3
B: Roy Moore (R)	Journalistic	16	19	12	5
	Opinion	3	8	7	1
Total		(47 articles)	(52 articles)	(38 articles)	(12 articles)

While the media outlets showed no significant contrasts in the extent of their reporting – with the exception of Fox News – their differences mainly came to light in the content of these articles. In my analysis, I divide the articles into eight recurring frames of sexual harassment reporting recognized in both scandals:

- 1) Individual aberration
- 2) Moral hypocrisy
- 3) Political hypocrisy
- 4) Political consequences
- 5) Bipartisan condemnation
- 6) Women’s rights
- 7) Conditional frame
- 8) Neutral frame

Three of these frames are loaned from researchers like Saguy (2003) and McDonald and Charlesworth (2013) that have conducted media research of sexual harassment before – the frames of individual aberration, political consequences and women’s rights. The others I have developed myself based on what problems and explanations seemed to arise out of the set of articles.

At least two of the frames constructed by Saguy (2003) in her research of the 1990s harassment scandals in American politics still seem to dominate sexual harassment reporting: the frame of politics (in my thesis, *the frame of political consequences*) and the frame of women's issue, which I have renamed as *the frame of women's rights*. In the political consequences frame, sexual harassment is discussed mainly in terms of what the sexual harassment scandals cause for the careers of the politicians accused of harassment. In the women's rights frame, on the other hand, the journalist puts the emphasis on the victims of sexual harassment. The stories often introduce the cases as new examples of the kind of enduring societal problems such as gender inequality and culture of abuse against women.

The individual aberration frame, then, is inspired by McDonald's and Charlesworth's discourse analysis (2013). In their analysis, the frame describes articles that address sexual harassment cases separately from the surrounding culture, instead of recognizing them as symptoms of deeper problems that are embedded in the workplace or the broader culture in which they come to light. Thus, the individuals at fault are of particular interest: why did they engage in such acts and what made them act that way in this instance? In addition to the individual aberration frame, *the frame of bipartisan condemnation* is also partly based on the systemic issue frame introduced by McDonald and Charlesworth, which discusses sexual harassment as a workplace- or an industry-level problem. The bipartisan condemnation frame covers all the articles that describe harassment as a systemic, nonpartisan and nonpolitical issue that calls for united action and that both Democrats and Republicans can condemn together.

As the list above shows, there are two different frames mentioning hypocrisy: both political and moral. *The moral hypocrisy frame* is only recognizable in Al Franken coverage and showed in articles that highlighted his track record as a champion of women's rights, while the scandal made it clear that he has not always lived up to those ideals. Articles grouped under *the frame of political hypocrisy* discuss the double standards in handling political sexual harassment scandals, wherein Republicans are more concerned about sexual harassment and women's rights when the perpetrator is a Democrat, and vice versa.

In addition to the moral hypocrisy frame, there was only one other frame that could be detected in just one of the two cases. *The conditional frame* was commonly used when reporting on Roy Moore, because unlike in Franken's case, his allegations could not be supported by photographic evidence or by his own confession or apology. On the contrary, Moore denied all allegations leveled against him. As a result of this, much of the reporting about his sexual harassment followed the logic of *if* the allegations are proven to be true, what will be the consequences?

Finally, *the neutral frame* is a category reserved for the two articles that did not politicize or problematize sexual harassment at all, but simply stated the facts about the case while the article itself focused on some other issue. Because they nonetheless mention the sexual harassment allegations and they were published during the researched time periods, I have also included the neutral articles in the analysis so as not to distort the data. Omitting them would have shown in the total number of coverage that I present in Table 1.

5.2 Quantitative comparison of the news articles

For the sake of clarity and to see if there are any significant framing differences in objective reporting and opinion journalism, I also compare the quantities of these two distinct categories. In the table below (Table 2), I present the findings of the news articles to distinguish which frames were the most prevalent and how they varied in different media outlets.

Some of the most notable differences in framing can be seen in the Fox News' column when comparing the cases of the two politicians. While the frame of bipartisan condemnation, which defines sexual harassment as a systemic issue in society that both parties are willing to combat, is the most common frame in their articles concerning Al Franken, it was completely absent in their reporting about allegations against the Republican Roy Moore. In their Franken coverage, the systemic and nonpartisan nature of sexual abuse was at the forefront and additionally, as many as five articles were linked to women's rights – compared with only one when writing about Moore's allegations.

Table 2: Identified frames in the journalistic articles

The number of articles for each identified frame in the objective news reporting, excluding all editorials, op-eds and letters to the editor.

Panel A: Al Franken				
	Media outlet			
	Fox News	CNN	NYT	WSJ
Individual aberration	3		2	
Moral hypocrisy	2			
Political hypocrisy	3	3	5	
Political consequences	2	2		
Bipartisan condemnation	9	10	4	3
Women's rights	5	4	2	
Conditional frame				
Neutral frame				
Total	(24 articles)	(19 articles)	(13 articles)	(3 articles)
Panel B: Roy Moore				
	Fox News	CNN	NYT	WSJ
Individual aberration	2	2	1	
Moral hypocrisy				
Political hypocrisy		1	1	
Political consequences	5	5	6	1
Bipartisan condemnation		1		
Women's rights	1	2	4	
Conditional frame	7	7		4
Neutral frame	1	1		
Total	(16 articles)	(19 articles)	(12 articles)	(5 articles)

Conversely, the conditional frame, which questions the credibility of sexual harassment allegations altogether, dominated Roy Moore reporting in conservative media and CNN. This is, of course, partly explained by the fact that Moore vehemently denied all allegations, whereas Franken admitted to the acts and apologized for his behavior. There was no room for doubt or “if true” statements in Franken’s case, which explains the lack of conditional framing. What is interesting about this particular frame, however, is that the New York Times was the only outlet that did not use the conditional frame at all when covering Roy Moore. The outlet did acknowledge that Moore had denied the allegations, but this conditionality was never prominent enough to be the dominating frame. Some articles left out Moore’s own response completely. The women’s accusations were defined as credible in the New York Times stories and they also often painted Republicans in a fairly cowardly light, emphasizing that they have strived to “distance themselves” [2] from Moore and abstained from taking any strong measures against him.

Wall Street Journal, on the other hand, linked nearly all of their Moore articles to the conditional frame, while they focused on the bipartisan and universal condemnation of sexual harassment when covering Al Franken. The conditional frame was the most frequent frame in Moore reporting in all the other three media – with the striking exception of the New York Times.

Moral hypocrisy was another frame that was only reserved for one of the two politicians, Al Franken, and presented by Fox News. The articles portrayed Franken as a hypocrite who does not practice what he preaches, who pretends to be a feminist while simultaneously engaging in abuse of power and misogynistic behavior. As values of equality and feminism tend to be of greater value for Democrats than Republicans and Moore himself is not known for his advocacy for women's rights, Moore was not linked to the same type of moral considerations in the media as Franken. Liberal media did not, however, engage in conversations about the moral consistency of Al Franken.

On the whole, there is a clear difference in Fox News' coverage on Franken and Moore, and at least their initial reporting seems to suggest that the allegations facing Franken are more severe than those of Moore. In the conditional and political consequences frames that Fox News mainly used for Moore, sexual harassment and the alleged perpetrator tend to get less criticism and scrutiny than in the frames of women's rights, bipartisan condemnation, and individual aberration.

As for CNN, the framing decisions for Roy Moore were noticeably more varied than when describing Franken's allegations. The articles discussing Moore revolved mostly around their conditional nature – that is, how Moore himself and Republican politicians have denied or doubted the truthfulness of the accusations – as well as political repercussions. Like with Fox News, when CNN covered Franken's accusations, their primary frame also was that of bipartisan condemnation. They also put a little more emphasis on women's rights when covering Franken.

Slight differences can also be detected in how CNN focused on Roy Moore's character and backstory (the individual aberration frame) in two articles, yet they do not do the same for Al Franken. The frame of political hypocrisy was also stronger in their reporting on Franken, where they discussed the interest Republicans showed towards Al Franken's case, while keeping quiet about the Moore allegations that had been publicized just a week earlier. For instance, CNN published articles about the asymmetric

response of President Trump who mocked Al Franken for his hypocrisy but did not address similar behavior by the in-party candidate, Roy Moore [3].

The frame of political hypocrisy is, for the purpose of my thesis, particularly interesting, because it delves into the exact type of double standards that Mason (2013, 141–142) describes as a key symptom of behavioral polarization. In Mason's view, these divisions have become increasingly common in American political culture: a behavior that is completely unacceptable (such as sexual harassment) for a politician of the opposing party becomes more tolerable when an in-party politician is guilty of similar acts.

In Fox News' articles that followed political hypocrisy framing, the emphasis was on Democrats' attempts to ignore Al Franken and shift focus so that Roy Moore or President Trump would be at the center of the public conversation for their harassment scandals. Fox News also brought up the Democrats' reactions to President Clinton's abuse scandal in a couple of articles. New York Times, on the other hand, seemed to accuse Republicans for the same thing: that they are ignoring the abuse by members of their own party, Roy Moore and Donald Trump, while holding Al Franken to a different standard. It is also worth pointing out that this political hypocrisy frame was the most common frame of all in New York Times' Franken coverage. When NYT wrote about Roy Moore, however, the focus was on political consequences – on what the scandal means for the election and whether the Democratic opponent has a chance of winning – as well as on women's rights.

The framing differences between Fox News and New York Times seem to suggest at least some level of partisan bias when it comes to covering these two sexual harassment scandals. Fox News was easier on the Republican Senate candidate Roy Moore and clearly more concerned about systemic sexual harassment and women's rights when the Al Franken scandal broke. Conversely, New York Times also used the women's rights framing more often in their coverage about Roy Moore than the Democratic Senator Al Franken. Additionally, the majority of New York Times' Franken coverage focused on the political hypocrisy of Republicans in handling these two scandals.

5.3 Quantitative comparison of the opinion articles

To analyze if there are significant contrasts between the opinion-based and objective journalism in these four media, I have gathered all the opinion articles from the same time periods in Table 3 below. CNN published the largest amount of opinion articles and also the most articles altogether, and slightly more of Roy Moore. There are no significant differences in numbers – New York Times published one more opinion article of Moore than Franken, and for Fox News it was just the opposite way around – but again, the differences in framing choices were more notable.

Table 3: Identified frames in the opinion articles

The number of articles for each identified frame in the opinion pieces, such as editorials, op-eds and letters to the editor.

Panel A: Al Franken				
	Media outlet			
	Fox News	CNN	NYT	WSJ
Individual aberration		1		
Moral hypocrisy				1
Political hypocrisy	2	1	3	1
Political cons.	1	1	1	1
Bipartisan cond.	1	1	1	
Women's rights		2	1	
Conditional frame				
Neutral frame				
Total	(4 articles)	(6 articles)	(6 articles)	(3 articles)
Panel B: Roy Moore				
	Fox News	CNN	NYT	WSJ
Individual aberration			2	
Moral hypocrisy				
Political hypocrisy	1	4	3	
Political cons.	1	2	1	1
Bipartisan cond.				
Women's rights		2	1	
Conditional frame	1			
Neutral frame				
Total	(3 articles)	(8 articles)	(7 articles)	(1 articles)

In the opinion section of Fox News, all four pieces commenting on the Al Franken scandal were highly critical: they recommended him to resign [4] or addressed the pervasiveness of sexual misconduct in

American politics [5]. The two articles that centered around political hypocrisy raised questions about why Franken is not universally condemned and asked to resign like Moore was, and about liberal media outlets that seemed to downplay the Franken accusations [4] [5]. When comparing these articles with Fox News' opinion pieces about Moore, one can notice a slight Republican-leaning bias in that no calls for resignation were made for Moore. The Republican bias is evident in one of the articles that explains why Alabamians are right to vote for Roy Moore even if the allegations are true, because in this election the conservative cultural values are at stake [7]. Another piece discusses the Senate race and the problematic nature of Moore's candidacy [8], and one of them simply states the facts of the case while saying that Moore denies the allegations [9].

The other conservative-leaning outlet, Wall Street Journal, published one editorial on Roy Moore, which seemed critical of him as an individual but clearly favored another Republican who lost the primary to Moore, Luther Strange [10]. The article is rather analytical and uses a very clear political consequences framing, but the editorial board's preference towards the Republican party can still be easily detected. The opinion pieces on Franken are quite neutral in tone, except for one, whose author is clearly a Republican voter who still recommends Alabamian women not to vote for Roy Moore because of his sexual harassment of teenage girls [11]. In the same article, the writer accuses liberal media of bias in their handling of the Franken allegations.

CNN's opinion section focused largely on women's rights and the bipartisan condemnation of sexual harassment. Their response to the Franken case was, however, quite varied: it involved scrutiny of his public apology [12], the need to stop politicizing sexual harassment [13], questions of Franken's political future [14], linking the case into the chain of allegations following #MeToo [15], one strong condemnation of his actions that nevertheless does not call him to resign [16], and finally, a highly critical article of President Trump and his past sexual harassment allegations [17].

The opinion section of CNN seemed notably more critical of Roy Moore and the Republican party leadership than of Franken. They covered his sexual harassment case with a slightly larger volume of articles (eight, compared with six articles of Franken) and mostly focused on the frame of political hypocrisy. These types of opinion pieces tended to ridicule Republican politicians who refuse to condemn the situation at hand [18], compare the Moore scandal to that of Donald Trump who has also

faced sexual harassment allegations [19], or question why in current political scandals the severity of the situation tends to get assessed based on the partisan affiliation of the politician [20].

New York Times' opinion pages were also mainly concerned with political hypocrisy in both of these scandals. One of their Franken opinion pieces, that shows messages from readers, condemns sexual harassment while also largely questioning the severity of the Franken accusations and the motivations of the victim, Leeann Tweeden, who is a conservative radio host [21]. A compilation of letters to the editor also shows that many readers of the New York Times are willing to condemn Roy Moore's actions, but do not think that Franken's misdeeds are as serious [22]. Two of the opinion articles focus on condemning political hypocrisy when it comes to sexual harassment, lamenting that the issue gets often politicized even though it should not be [23].

During the first days of the Moore scandal, the New York Times' opinion pages paint a rather negative picture of Roy Moore as an individual. The discussion centers around Moore's past comments on gays, transgender people and Muslims, while pointing out the hypocrisy of Moore being a devout Christian who has violated his religious values by sexually harassing teenagers [24] [25]. In addition to condemning Moore's actions, New York Times' op-eds also blame the Republican establishment for their tepid response [26] and for going so far as defending him, saying that Moore has not done anything illegal [27].

To summarize, the frame of political hypocrisy was particularly evident in the opinion articles of these two sexual harassment scandals. Instead of depoliticizing the issue, focusing on the #MeToo culture and women's rights, a majority of the commentary occurred on the meta level: how the scandals have been addressed by the two political parties and how the political double standards have affected the conversation and actions taken. Many of the opinion articles also made visible the political biases that many researchers have recognized before: Fox News placed the Democratic politician, Al Franken, under more scrutiny, whereas New York Times and CNN covered Roy Moore and the Republican party leadership in more detail and more critically. Wall Street Journal had only four opinion articles about the scandals in total, but they also showed a Republican-leaning slant.

5.4 Frames within #MeToo scandal reporting

In order to give a more profound understanding of how the frames discussed in this chapter were constructed, I present them in more detail in this subsection by also providing examples of the wording choices and topics of the articles. The section covers both opinion pieces and journalistic articles, but they are always marked accordingly, so that the differences are clear between the two analyzed categories.

Political consequences (used in 30 / 149 articles)

As Roy Moore and Al Franken are both politicians, it is hardly surprising to see that a large portion of the scandal reporting was framed through politics. The frame of politics was actually the most common frame – tied with the frame of bipartisan condemnation – with 30 articles out of 149 written along its rules. The frame was evident in articles that analyzed the sexual harassment cases in terms of political futures of the two men. These articles were mainly concerned with the future of the politicians' careers and how these allegations might shift the power dynamics within the whole political system – for instance, when discussing whether the deeply Republican state of Alabama might end up being represented by a Democratic senator due to the scandal. The news stories using this frame often include comments of political operatives and high-level politicians of both the Republican and Democratic party, thus letting them define the conversation.

The articles relate to political analyses on whether the politician will be requested to step down, how the party leadership comments on the allegations, and how likely it is that they will lose the election because of the new information that emerged. The discussion also centered around very technical topics, such as how the Moore scandal affects campaign funding, what the polling numbers look like at any given moment, and so on. In the Roy Moore articles, articles that used political consequences framing would discuss the probabilities for a Moore win or analyze whether Alabama Republicans made a fateful decision by picking Moore as the candidate over his challenger in the primary race, Luther Strange, who was the party establishment's favorite.

The coverage was influenced by typical political framing conventions where politics is framed through conflict or as some kind of a game (de Vreese, 2014). In election coverage, it is also quite usual to see politics described as a contest like any other: it is often described as a race where there are frontrunners, winners and losers:

And Sen. Luther Strange was the obvious answer in Alabama, at least for the larger purposes of the president, his party and its agenda. Moore's many defects as a candidate were well known when his race with Strange began. But given Moore's strong support among religious conservatives and Strange's connections to disgraced former Gov. Robert Bentley, the pistol-packing former prosecutor emerged as the frontrunner. [8] (*Opinion, Fox News*)

Many of the Moore articles that were framed through political consequences focused on the results of upcoming election. The actual sexual harassment is only mentioned in passing, while giving most of the article space to analyzing how the case affects the political system and what are the probable results of the Alabama senate election.

A poll taken Thursday in the aftermath of the Washington Post report alleging sexual misconduct by Mr. Moore showed the Senate race had narrowed to a 46%-46% tie. The poll of 515 likely voters by Opinion Savvy, commissioned by the nonpartisan political website Decision Desk HQ, was far closer than most recent polls before the Moore accusations surfaced, which showed the Republican with double-digit leads. [28] (*News article, WSJ*)

The journalists in the liberal outlets also analyzed how the Moore scandal will affect the chances of the Democratic candidate, Doug Jones, and how Democrats are planning to organize in Alabama now that it seems that the state might be more accepting of a liberal alternative:

For Democrats, the new developments will add fuel to an already fiery internal debate over how much time and resources the party should invest in backing their own nominee, Doug Jones. "There was going to be pressure to go all in even before the WaPo bombshell, but now there's really no choice," a Democratic strategist told CNN. [29] (*News article, CNN*)

In Franken's case, the frame of political consequences showed in articles that analyzed whether a simple ethics investigation in the Senate would suffice or if Franken should resign after the sexual harassment has come to light. Some articles state that "his political future has been thrown into doubt" and they question whether he can survive the scandal [30].

Al Franken's future in the Senate is in doubt after a radio news anchor said he forcibly kissed and groped her a decade ago during a USO tour overseas. Leeann Tweeden also released a photo of what appears to be Franken grabbing Tweeden's breasts while she's sleeping. Franken apologized, but the reaction has been swift. A Senate ethics investigation has been called for, including by Franken himself, and some Dems say this really could lead to Franken's expulsion from the Senate. [31] (*News article, CNN*)

By putting the political system and the men accused of harassment to the center, these articles often give less weight and attention to the victims of sexual harassment. The sexual harassment was often mentioned only very briefly, by stating the facts of the case and describing how Moore and Franken have responded to the allegations. Even though the frame was political in nature, it did not address sexual harassment as a political issue in itself.

Bipartisan condemnation (used in 30 / 149 articles)

The frame of bipartisan condemnation addresses the sexual harassment cases as a broader systemic problem where party affiliations are not important, contrary to the political consequences and political hypocrisy frames. These articles often interview members of both major political parties who come out to denounce sexual misconduct. Some articles also explain bipartisan efforts to take sexual harassment accusations seriously and prevent them in future U.S. politics. The idea that sexual harassment should never be tolerated and that it is not a partisan issue are the key messages present in most of these articles.

Contrary to the women's rights frame, this frame generally does not take into account harassment elsewhere in the culture other than politics or discuss broader gender inequality or power issues that might cause sexual harassment. The frame establishes sexual harassment as a deeply political issue, yet not a partisan one: politicians of both parties seem to speak with one voice and condemn all harassment. Much like in the political consequences frame, nearly all interviewees come from the political system, but this frame puts the harassment in the center and takes it seriously.

A clear majority of articles in this category were written about Al Franken. They often referenced the Moore allegations that had been brought to the public's attention only a week earlier and argued that these two cases, as well as all the other ones that have emerged, should be handled in a similar way. The statements referenced in the bipartisan condemnation articles often include phrases such as *"regardless of party"* or *"no matter one's party or politics"*.

The following statement was made by Tom Perez, the Democratic National Committee Chairman, after receiving news of the Franken scandal:

"The allegations brought forth are extremely disturbing," Perez said in a statement. "Sexual misconduct, harassment, and assault are never acceptable, no matter one's party or politics. The Senate should immediately begin an ethics investigation into Senator Franken's conduct." [32] (*News article, Fox News*)

The comments by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R) and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D) were referenced in a lot of these articles, and they follow a similar pattern that denies the partisan nature of sexual harassment.

"As with all credible allegations of sexual harassment or assault, I believe the Ethics Committee should review the matter," Mr. McConnell said. "Regardless of party, harassment and assault are completely unacceptable—in the workplace or anywhere else."

Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) echoed Mr. McConnell's call, saying in a statement: "Sexual harassment is never acceptable and must not be tolerated. I hope and expect that the Ethics Committee will fully investigate this troubling incident, as they should with any credible allegation of sexual harassment." [33] (*News article, WSJ*)

Women's rights (used in 24 / 149 articles)

The frame of women's rights was above all related to the #MeToo movement. It puts the most emphasis on the victims who have previously had to suffer silently with their experiences of sexual harassment and how the culture is slowly starting to change. These articles bring to light some remaining issues embedded in the culture: that despite some improvements, men can still get away with accusations of sexual harassment as women are not always believed. This problem was especially relevant in the Moore case because it did not have any damning evidence – it was ultimately Moore's word against the women's. Franken's scandal was different in this respect: he admitted that the accusation was real and there was a photograph of Franken groping the victim as she was sleeping.

In these articles, the Franken and Moore cases are often grouped together and considered to be a part of a long-standing culture of abuse against women, instead of being standalone allegations. Much like in the frame of bipartisan condemnation, the politicians themselves and their parties are irrelevant, as the women's stories and realities are given the most attention and space. These types of articles would often mention Louis C.K., Harvey Weinstein, Kevin Spacey, or other sexual harassment allegations by prominent men that were brought to light during the #MeToo movement. References to political sexual

harassment scandals of 1990s, like those concerning President Clinton and Senator Bob Packwood, were also common.

The problem is that from Democrats John F. Kennedy, John Edwards, Bill Clinton and now, Al Franken, to Republicans Bob Packwood, Donald Trump and the ongoing scandal around Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore, who's accused of sexual abuse and pursuit of underage women, members of both parties have been guilty of sexual misconduct that betrays their public claims to respect women and belies any commitment to our full equality. ... Because whether, it's Hollywood, Capitol Hill, Corporate America or a cashier's job at Walmart -- whether it's a blue state or a red state -- equality for women in the workplace shouldn't be optional.” [13], (*Opinion, CNN*)

This frame was also used to connect the harassment scandals into a broader picture of gender inequality and the challenges that women face. For instance, Fox News reported about a Democratic gubernatorial candidate from Ohio, Bill O’Neill, who had downplayed the Franken scandal and used objectifying language when describing his own experiences with women.

“We’re having a serious national conversation about rape culture and sexual harassment, and it’s crucial for men to take time to listen to women and consider their experiences and insights,” Ohio Democratic Party spokeswoman Kirstin Alvanitakis told Fox News. “Unfortunately, Justice O’Neill’s Facebook comments that dehumanize women add nothing to this important conversation, which is actually about harassment and abuse, not encounters between consenting adults.” [34] (*News article, Fox News*)

The frame also included articles about toxic masculinity that affects men and ultimately also women. The issue of women not being taken seriously and getting shamed for sharing their stories of abuse was a common topic in the women’s rights frame.

Roy Moore allegedly took advantage of girls he offered to look out for, girls the same age as a young Diana Nyad when she was, she says, assaulted by her coach. In these allegations we see a pattern of men repeatedly abusing their power and getting away with it while women and girls, correctly understanding that they would be systematically shamed if they "told," were silenced and disempowered. [35] (*Opinion, CNN*)

It is also necessary to note the striking difference between liberal and conservative media in utilizing this frame. The liberal outlets – New York Times and CNN – both published opinion pieces tied to this frame during both scandals, while the opinion sections of Fox News and Wall Street Journal published none. However, the frame of women’s rights was used disproportionately frequently in Fox News’ news reporting during the first days of the Franken scandal when compared to their news about Moore, which seems to suggest a certain political preference. Based on this set of data, liberal media seems to condemn sexual harassment more strongly and not link it as strongly to party politics. While the frame

itself does not involve party politics, the disproportionate use of the frame for one party's politician only seems like a biased journalistic choice.

One category of stories put victims of sexual harassment at the center stage by interviewing them and making their personal stories heard, while all but erasing the abuser and his political background.

Speaking on CNN's "The Lead" with Jake Tapper on Thursday, Tweeden said that the incident, which occurred in 2006, before Franken was a senator, left her "so angry, I was in disbelief." "To this day I talk about it and my hand clenches into a fist," Tweeden said. Tweeden explained the incident happened backstage before a USO skit after Franken suggested they rehearse the kiss scene. [36] (*News article, CNN*)

Individual aberration (used in 13 / 149 articles)

In the frame of an individual aberration, sexual harassment is seen as an act that is consistent with the abuser when looking at his personal history. Stories framed this way give the majority of attention to the men themselves, their past behavior and assess how characteristic these allegations are when compared to their entire public lives. These kinds of reports often paint an image of Al Franken or Roy Moore as people who have a proven history of predatory or otherwise inappropriate behavior.

This was not, however, always the case. The stories might also portray the men in a more positive light and present this behavior as uncharacteristic, but still focus on the perpetrators and not on the victims of sexual abuse – which is, in a way, the opposite of the women's rights frame. The cases are viewed as standalone occurrences, with little attention given to the broader #MeToo discussion and other men accused of similar acts. These reports give the impression that Franken and Moore alone are to blame and they often try to seek something in their past that could indicate that this behavior is not unusual to them.

In Franken's case, this frame was evident in coverage that recounted his lewd rape jokes or skits from his earlier career as a comedian. The articles build a character arc of someone who certainly has not always been as strong a supporter of women's rights that he has later become known to be in his political career:

Others said they had seen this brand of behavior from Mr. Franken before. During his Senate campaign in 2008, Republicans pointed to a column he wrote for Playboy in 2000 called "Porn-O-Rama!" that joked about visiting a sex laboratory; a sketch he proposed on "Saturday Night Live" in which the CBS journalist Lesley Stahl was drugged and

raped; and comments at a Human Rights Campaign dinner, before he was in the Senate, that included jokes about lesbians. [37] (*News article, NYT*)

Both liberal and conservative media outlets, Fox News and New York Times, brought to light the past behavior of Franken and Moore that might explain their subsequent sexual harassment of women.

However, CNN reserved this frame for only Roy Moore.

Franken eventually apologized for his crude remarks, but he later wrote in his book, “Al Franken: Giant of the Senate,” that he faked the apology to get the necessary support for his election win, according to the New York Times. “To say I was sorry for writing a joke was to sell out my career, to sell out who I’d been my entire life,” he wrote in the book. “And I wasn’t sorry that I had written Porn-o-Rama or pitched that stupid Lesley Stahl joke at 2 in the morning. I was just doing my job.” [38] (*News article, Fox News*)

In the aftermath of the Roy Moore revelations, multiple articles also focused on his misbehavior in various stages of his political career. The articles did not focus so much on his past treatment of women, but did emphasize his evangelical Christian beliefs and his history of hateful comments about homosexuality. One op-ed writer in New York Times reminded that Moore has, for example, compared homosexuality to bestiality in the past and was ousted from his post of chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court after he told the state’s judges to defy the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage [25].

Nationally, Mr. Moore is known for ranting against gay people, but he is most celebrated at home for putting a granite monument of more than 5,000 pounds engraved with the Ten Commandments in the rotunda of the state judicial building and giving up his job as chief justice rather than obey a court order for its removal. In other words, he was cast perfectly to star in Alabama’s timeless election carnival of romanticized defiance and self-parody. [24] (*Opinion, NYT*)

But like many in urban and suburban Alabama, the two women viewed the allegations reported by The Washington Post that Mr. Moore had made sexual overtures to teenagers decades ago not so much as a discrete scandal. Rather, it felt to them like the latest episode in a tawdry political sideshow with seemingly endless chapters. “We’ve spent millions in Alabama on Roy Moore’s antics,” Ms. Gunter said. [39] (*News article, NYT*)

Many articles, especially in the liberal outlets, also complemented these articles with comments by Alabamian politicians who backed Moore, one of whom compared Moore’s relationship with a teenager to that of Jesus’ parents, Joseph and Mary. According to him, this was just another proof that there was nothing “illegal or immoral” about Moore’s relations with teenagers [40]. In that way, these articles made extreme religiosity, and simultaneously Moore’s background, seem questionable and even harmful. Then again, many biblical scholars were also quick to denounce these comments – like it was made clear in one Fox News article [41]: “*If this is evangelicalism, I’m on the wrong team,*” the

evangelical commentator Ed Stetzer wrote in Christianity Today. "But it is not. Christians don't use Joseph and Mary to explain child molesting accusations."

Conditional frame (used in 19 / 149 articles)

The conditional frame was solely used in reporting about Roy Moore because, as previously mentioned, he never admitted to being guilty of the acts and there was no other evidence than the reports by the alleged victims. As the statute of limitations has passed long ago, there would not emerge any new evidence either. Thus, the situation allowed Republican politicians not to make any definitive comments about the case and leave the decision of whether to continue the race to Moore himself. Moore, on the other hand, dismissed the allegations as politically motivated and said that he would not quit.

However, Sen. John Cornyn (R., Texas), one of five senators who have endorsed Mr. Moore, said he believes in a "presumption of innocence until proven guilty." In a written statement to the Post, Mr. Moore said "These allegations are completely false and are a desperate political attack by the National Democrat Party and the Washington Post on this campaign." [42] (*News article, Wall Street Journal*)

"If the allegations are true, Moore should quit the race" was a phrase that dominated the Moore reporting by Fox News, CNN, and Wall Street Journal. Interestingly, New York Times was the only outlet that did not use this framing at all, which seems to suggest a certain journalistic decision: they choose not to doubt the women who accuse powerful men of sexual harassment, even in the absence of incriminating evidence. By raising doubts about the sincerity of the women and the partisan motivations that might be fueling the harassment allegations, conservative outlets form a wholly different kind of a reality around sexual harassment.

Many of the Republican politicians who were interviewed about what should happen to Roy Moore said that he should quit the senate race only *if* the allegations proved to be true. They only discussed the allegations in a hypothetical sense, which meant that they did not seem to believe the women who raised these allegations. The allegations by Leigh Corfman were described in these articles, but often only in passing: most of the quotes came from Republican politicians, like President Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, that emphasized that people should not simply take her word for it.

President Trump thinks Alabama Republican Senate candidate Roy Moore “will do the right thing and step aside” if the sexual misconduct allegations against him are true, the White House said in a statement Thursday.

Speaking to reporters following the president’s Asia trip on Air Force One, White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders also cautioned against a rush to judgment. “Like most Americans, the president believes we cannot allow a mere allegation, in this case one from many years ago, to destroy a person’s life,” Sanders said. “However, the president also believes that if these allegations are true, Judge Moore will do the right thing and step aside.” [43] (*News article, Fox News*)

Moral hypocrisy (used in 3/149 articles)

The moral hypocrisy frame brings forth the intrinsic irony of a feminist icon who also has a history of sexually harassing women. The frame was only used on two occasions by Fox News and once by the opinion section of WSJ to describe the scandal of Al Franken. The frame is an interesting example of how polarization shows in reporting, because considering the out-party members as hypocritical has been recognized as one manifestation of affective polarization (Iyengar et al., 2019).

This particular frame brings to light Franken’s strong support for the #MeToo movement just weeks prior to his own sexual misconduct becoming public information. These articles condemned Franken for preaching to others about sexual harassment while also personally contributing to the problem.

Democratic Sen. Al Franken was quick to speak out on sexual harassers like Harvey Weinstein in recent weeks. Now that a Los Angeles radio host is accusing the Minnesota lawmaker of groping her a decade ago, those comments are back in the spotlight. Last month, Franken posted across multiple social media platforms his praise for the “incredibly brave” women who came forward to accuse Hollywood producer Weinstein of sexual assault and harassment. [44] (*News article, Fox News*)

The moral hypocrisy frame was rather rarely used in reporting – only three out of 149 articles were defined by this particular frame. It was still different and interesting enough to elicit its own category that was separate from political hypocrisy, because these articles focused on Franken himself as a hypocrite, instead of the whole Democratic party. It can still be argued that these types of articles can also add to affective polarization, when conservative media paints a Democratic politician as a sanctimonious do-gooder.

Political hypocrisy (used in 28 / 149 articles)

The political hypocrisy frame is the clearest example of behavioral polarization in action. These types of articles bring attention to how Democratic and Republican politicians are seemingly held to a different standard when it comes to gender equality and sexual harassment. Based on the findings, it seems that conservative media outlets tend to think that Republicans are treated unfairly, while liberal media argue for an opposite reality: that Republicans and conservative media only care about sexual harassment when the accused person is from the opposing party. The central argument of this frame is that the game is always rigged against the in-party candidate. This frame was the most popular one in the opinion pieces for New York Times, CNN, and Fox News.

The political hypocrisy frame was overwhelmingly used in the aftermath of the Al Franken scandal, but there was also one Fox News analysis article that depicted the left's response to the Moore allegations as partisan. Wall Street Journal also alluded to the liberal media's partisan bias in sexual harassment reporting in an op-ed [11]: *"Will the liberal media dig into Mr. Franken as they have dug into Mr. Moore? Or is he too good a source and friend?"*

Eventually, the mainstream media decided it was time to scrutinize Franken and hold him accountable. But they typically raised in the same breath the case of Roy Moore, the embattled Alabama Republican Senate candidate accused of inappropriate behavior with underage girls in the 1970s. When Trump chimed in on Twitter, it turned into a perfect opportunity for the anti-Trump crowd to bring up old allegations against the president. [45] (*News article, Fox News*)

The conservative outlets that used this frame blamed Democrats and liberal media for treating Roy Moore unfairly due to his Republican background and for favoring Franken. According to one Fox News opinion piece, *"Moore and Franken are wrongly being held to two completely different standards"* [5]. Some of the news articles also bring up President Clinton's harassment scandals from the 1990s and ask why Democrats still refuse to denounce his actions and instead honor him by holding an annual fundraising gala in his name [46]. One of Fox News' opinion articles states that although at first the Moore scandal "was going exactly the way the left and the media wanted", soon "the tidal wave of sexual misconduct claims once more shifted toward the left". The same article accuses liberal media of hypocrisy and attempting to downplay the Franken scandal. [6]

Regardless of what your opinion is of Moore, this appears to be a disturbing two-faced approach in which Moore and Franken are wrongly being held to two completely different standards. ... If Franken were a Republican, can anyone really say with a straight face that there wouldn't be universal screams for his head, reverberating so emphatically that his political life might be over already? [5] (*Opinion, Fox News*)

These articles bring to light the toxic political culture where sexual harassment is transformed into a political tool to be used only when it is beneficial to one's preferred party. One category of articles following this frame of reporting are New York Times pieces accusing Republicans of being harsher towards Franken than Moore when it comes to their sexual harassment allegations. The liberal media often brought up the sexual harassment accusations against President Trump in some of their Franken articles. A New York Times headline calls President Trump a "veteran of sexual harassment accusations" [47] and another one states that "In mocking Franken over claims of sexual misconduct, Trump joins a debate he started" [48].

One of their news articles, which is excerpted here, addresses how members of both parties seem to view sexual harassment through their own partisan lenses:

Indeed, Republicans on Friday were more than happy to talk about Senator Al Franken, Democrat of Minnesota, who apologized this week after a radio newscaster said he forcibly kissed her and posed for a photograph a decade ago appearing to fondle her breasts while she was sleeping. Democrats, for their part, sought to keep the focus on Roy S. Moore, the Republican candidate in Alabama who has been accused of unwanted sexual conduct by multiple women going back even further, including one who was 14 at the time. [48] (*News article, NYT*)

Many of the articles, especially in the liberal media, linked to this frame were arguments *against* political double standards [24]. This was used by the opinion sections of New York Times and CNN. They aimed to start a conversation about the polarized political culture and social identities and how they currently steer people's views about sexual harassment. While drawing people's attention the polarized debate around sexual harassment, media reporting has the ability to further strengthen the existing animosity between the two political parties. New York Times published an analysis about the power of political identity, saying that it has an influence on which political sexual harassment accusations people deem credible and whether they think they matter:

This is also why reactions to the recent wave of accusations about sexual harassment and assault can differ depending on who is being accused. In some cases, like the accusations against the Alabama Republican Senate candidate Roy Moore, people's partisan group-based identities have been activated. [49] (*News article, NYT*)

The frame of political hypocrisy was particularly common for liberal media and dominated their opinion articles. One New York Times op-ed writer argued that the "if true, Moore should resign" response by Republican leaders was insufficient and cowardly, while stating that the Moore people are brushing off the scandal as a partisan machination by the Washington Post. [26] One New York Times

op-ed writer gave Republicans and conservatives only one reason to support Roy Moore: blind tribalism caused by the polarized political culture in the United States:

Roy Moore today is a challenge for those who see themselves as good and decent people of faith: If you find yourself excusing child molestation, then you are driven not by morality or faith, but simply by the emptiest kind of tribalism. [51] (*Opinion, NYT*)

While in the majority of articles the partisan biases are quite subtle, there were still some examples of more hostile and direct attacks against the other party. One conservative contributor on Fox News seemed to suggest that the accusations against Moore are fabricated and circulated by the liberal media, which renders them invalid.

The media on a near weekly basis runs stories that paint culturally conservative voters in a negative light, often distorting basic facts for the sake of narrative. So you'll have to excuse Trump voters and Moore voters for thinking the left in this country with a complicit media is out to get them. Along comes a story about Roy Moore, a happily married man, that involves facts from 30 to 40 years ago and many of the same people who've spent a long time covering for people like Harvey Weinstein and are still covering for Hollywood pedophiles are piling on the man. [6] (*Opinion, Fox News*)

At the same time, liberal media outlets addressed the Moore scandal as yet another example of Republicans turning a blind eye to sexual harassment when it happens within their own rank:

Moore plans to weather this political storm with help from the same God-fearing conservatives who made sure Donald Trump remained on a path to the presidency after being caught on video bragging about sexually assaulting women. And there's no reason Moore won't survive it, for in our region, in the eyes of many conservative Christians, the only evil greater than Satan himself is a Democrat with political power. Increasingly, little else seems to matter. [50] (*Opinion, CNN*)

In sum, this particular frame seems to point the differences in reactions in the two ideological camps, but it could also have the tendency to deepen the behavioral polarization between them. This polarizing language shows especially in opinion pieces where the liberal media calls the other side the “Trumpworld” [26] and Roy Moore a Bible-thumper [51], whereas Fox News describes liberals as “the anti-Trump crowd” [45] and “people who talk Jesus and behave like Satan” [7]. Instead of bringing out unity and solutions, many articles resort to bashing the other party and seeking moral high ground. The central problem is the other party or polarized political culture in a broader sense.

This goes to show that the political hypocrisy frame does not bring out the common humanity of the two parties, like the bipartisan condemnation frame does, and thus does not invite all Americans to

fight against a toxic culture of sexual harassment together. Instead, it turns sexual harassment into a deeply partisan issue. It pinpoints and emphasizes the differences between Republicans and Democrats as two groups with different ideals and solutions who cannot seem to agree on anything – even on how sexual harassment should be addressed.

6. Conclusion

It could be expected in the beginning of this project that some partisan biases could be detected in the opinion sections of these media. On the contrary, it would have been surprising *not* to see CNN and New York Times be more critical of Republicans or for Fox News and Wall Street Journal not showing any disdain towards Democrats. However, I did not expect the differences to be quite as striking in news reports that are aiming towards objectivity as they ended up being. This research helps understand how the partisan media can create these reporting differences through framing.

Recall in the first chapter, I mention that the following question would guide my thesis: *How do the media frames of American political scandals differ from one another on the basis of party lines and the ideological bias of media outlets?* By analyzing the scandal reporting of Roy Moore and Al Franken in both liberal and conservative outlets, I did notice framing differences that seem to relate to the ideological leanings of these media. It is, of course, impossible to know whether these journalistic decisions were made consciously or not, but solving the journalistic mindsets has never been the goal of my thesis. Instead, what really matters to me and what matters to the public is the outcome: how any given issue, like sexual harassment, ultimately gets framed in the media and what kind of content the already polarized nation gets to consume.

Both sections of my analysis, the quantitative and the qualitative, managed to showcase mechanisms in the media that create double standards for Democrats and Republicans, which is one way of expressing behavioral polarization. By comparing the amounts of articles and how common each defined frame is, I recognized at least four ways in which American partisan media may further reinforce behavioral polarization within the electorate by their scandal reporting.

Firstly, they can do so by making biased reporting decisions on which party's politicians to scrutinize in more detail – as Fox News did with Al Franken when compared with their noticeably more limited Moore reporting. While they published a total of 28 articles of Al Franken in the first three days of his harassment scandal, they only wrote 19 articles of the Republican Moore within a corresponding time period. By covering the topics to different extent, one is given more weight and importance than the other.

Second, the conditional frame that was unique to the Roy Moore scandal, gave some insight into how media tackles sexual harassment cases that cannot be corroborated by the alleged person's confession or other unequivocal evidence. Moore and Franken were handled very differently in the media based on how the men themselves responded to the allegations – whether they owned up to them (Franken) or denied them as false (Moore). Interestingly, New York Times was the only medium that did not use the conditional framing of Roy Moore at all, but instead gave his accusers more credibility and less room for doubt than the other outlets. Their reporting made it seem as if New York Times did not believe Moore's claims of his innocence, as Moore's comments to the scandal were often only mentioned in passing.

Third of all, the differences in reporting were perhaps nowhere as clear as in the variation of the women's rights and bipartisan condemnation frames. While the bipartisan condemnation frame was the most popular one in the Franken media scandal for both conservative outlets, it was wholly nonexistent when they covered the conservative Roy Moore's harassment allegations. Similarly, the liberal media only used the bipartisan condemnation frame in the Franken case, where there was an actual bipartisan agreement on the topic.

Fourth of all, the political hypocrisy frame is in and of itself polarizing, as described in the previous chapter. By turning a sexual harassment scandal into a meta-discussion about polarization and the deep divide between Republicans and Democrats, the frame can ultimately cause people to feel even more distant from the opposing party. The frame of political hypocrisy was most common in the opinion sections of CNN and New York Times. The polarizing effect of mainstream media and the increased media commentary on polarization has been noticed in previous research as well (Iyengar et al., 2019). It seems that the mere discussion about increased polarization causes people to *feel* as if the two

partisan groups are more distant from each other. The derogatory language that the liberal media use in these articles of Republicans and conservative media about Democrats makes the affective polarization between the two parties visible.

These aforementioned framing differences show how behavioral polarization works in practice and how media can actively contribute to its existence. The American electorate is already polarized as it is and has become more and more ideologically sorted – that is, their partisan ideologies have begun to shape their identities more strongly and also resentment towards out-party members has increased (Abramowitz & McCoy, 2019). My findings show how in a polarized culture even seemingly nonpartisan social issues, like sexual harassment, can be turned into highly partisan squabbles in the news media. Behavioral polarization can thus drive people towards very different realities and understandings of the world.

Donald Trump won the presidency in 2016 by tapping into behavioral polarization and using it to his political advantage. He vilified immigrants, women, political elites, and the mainstream media and blamed them for America's downfall (Abramowitz & McCoy 2019). As Alan Abramowitz and Jennifer McCoy explain (2019, 139), "*Trump masterfully articulated and reinforced the existing divides in the electorate, but did not create them*". The media has also been an important tool in separating between "us" and "them". Trump's hatred of liberal media has been in full display since his presidential campaign, as he has dubbed them "the enemy of the people" (Abramowitz & McCoy, 2019, 150) and frequently accuses outlets like New York Times and CNN of spreading misinformation. This may lead to stronger disavowal of these media outlets in the conservative camp and an urge to seek other news sources, while simultaneously adding to the liberal media's distaste of Trump.

The first and foremost purpose of my research was to explain how the media outlets' biases affect their handling of political scandals in the United States. However, it might be even more crucial to try to understand *why* these differences exist in the first place and why it matters. What does it mean in a broader sense if two people can get a very different understanding of politics based on whether they happen tune in CNN or Fox News on a daily basis? As mentioned in chapter 3, the media system in the United States has never been more abundant and more fragmented to suit different audiences than it currently is. Americans are also well aware of the partisan leanings of media outlets – or at least assign

certain partisan biases to them – and more often than not choose news sources that support their own political ideologies, which can further polarize the attitudes of individuals (Messing & Westwood, 2014).

Partisan media outlets do not aim towards consensus, balance and mutual understanding, as they are usually deliberately taking the side of one preferred party and sharing these ideas to their readers and viewers who tend to be already polarized (Levendusky, 2013). My research on sexual harassment framing is only one example of how partisan media can skew news topics to be more favorable to their own political leaning, but there are surely other topics where these kinds of framing differences help drive the existence of separate realities. At worst, if the nation becomes hyperpolarized and stops subscribing to at least some kind of a common understanding of facts, it will ultimately be detrimental to the democratic process and national unity. In the past few years, United States has in fact already seen extreme partisanship affecting faith in the electoral process and other foundations of democracy (Iyengar et al., 2019).

#MeToo is an example of a movement where media once again proved its immense power as the Fourth Estate. After being first introduced to the world in the fall of 2017, #MeToo has started a real conversation about sexual harassment that has ultimately toppled political leaders and entertainment empires. Harvey Weinstein, from whom the whole movement started, was sentenced to prison for 23 years for rape and sexual assault in the spring of 2020 (Aratani & Pilkington, 2020). As for the two politicians covered in this thesis, they also came to face consequences for their actions. Ultimately, Al Franken was forced to resign from U.S. Senate due to political pressure rising from both parties. Despite being backed by the Republican party, Roy Moore did not come out of the scandal unscathed either. The Democratic opponent, Doug Jones, managed to defeat Moore in a historical senate race in Alabama that turned the deep red state blue.

As to the Leann Tweeden quote referenced in the title of my thesis, it seems apparent that sexual harassment by politicians continues to be turned into a political and partisan tool during times of heightened polarization. American partisan media with its immense power to shape public opinion do also seem to add to the phenomenon of behavioral polarization. It seems that to many journalists, sexual harassment is, in fact, about donkeys and elephants, about Democrats and Republicans, and not

a broad societal problem that affects all women in the same way, no matter where they happen to fall on the political spectrum.

7. Discussion

7.1 Limitations of the study

What I believe my thesis has achieved is a relatively comprehensive understanding of how differently these two particular scandals were depicted in American media. The goal was to conduct a comparative analysis of the chosen set of articles that would answer to my research question. By choosing one case from each political party and an equal number of liberal and conservative outlets, I was able to compile a data set that allowed for balanced analysis. Research validity is assessed through whether the method and data collection can actually measure what the research is supposed to be measure (Metsämuuronen, 2011, 51). In my view, the equal representation of both conservative and liberal outlets and the two political parties have allowed me to answer *how* the media coverage differs on their basis, which makes the research valid.

One shortcoming that I did, however, face in the data set was that Wall Street Journal had a clearly lesser amount of articles to research than the other outlets, but I still seemed it important to include it as another example of conservative outlets because of its widely recognized bias. It still had an evenly divided split of articles for both cases – six of each – which I considered a large enough number for the paper to be included. The main limitations of my research relate to the limited amount of data and outlets that do not permit me to make generalizations. Although omitting CNN's and Fox News' political talk shows and other televised content was a conscious choice, I also acknowledge that for some fans of these channels, these talk shows can be a more important source for news than the online sites.

Reliability, on the other hand, answers to how well the results of a research can be repeated, if the same phenomenon was studied again with the same methodology (Metsämuuronen, 2011, 60). As my focus has been only on two select cases and the research is mostly qualitative, I am unable to make any broad

generalizations of the findings, nor has that been the objective of my research. Despite this, I believe that due to the well-documented political biases of these four media (see chapter 2.3), similar results could be expected were this kind of research repeated with different data. Media reporting of sexual harassment surely changes over time, as they notice shortcomings in reporting and adjust it over time. However, it seems that at least some sexual harassment media frames are quite timeless, since I was able to detect the very same media frames that researchers like Saguy (2003) and McDonald and Charlesworth (2013) have pointed out years ago in their frame analyses.

As the topic of my research is a highly politically sensitive subject, people can view this subject from different standpoints. Throughout this research process, I have actively strived to actively recognize my own personal biases and be cautious as to not let them affect the analysis. Then again, I did not have anything to gain from favoring either conservative or liberal media, so in my opinion, I was able to approach the data with only one goal: to better understand how the scandal reporting varies based on which news outlet one turns to for information.

7.2 Suggestions for further research

In my opinion, it would be useful to conduct a more extensive analysis of sexual harassment framing that would also take into account scandals that are completely nonpartisan. For instance, it would be interesting to learn if some of these frames could be recognized in sexual harassment cases that are less polarizing politically, like the scandals of Harvey Weinstein, Louis C.K. and Kevin Spacey, who are not political figures. In these cases, one could also test whether conservative and liberal media would come closer together in their reporting when the accused person does not represent either political party.

The topic of affective polarization would be interesting to research in the Finnish political environment as well, even though we do not have quite as clearly defined partisan media as the United States. The Finnish multi-party system also makes these ideological leanings of media more difficult to detect, as differences between issue positions are subtler than in a two-party system. I still find that it would be important to research whether some political parties are held to a higher moral standard than others

when it comes to scandals. This subject has already been researched in the Danish context (see Bhatti et al., 2013), but applying it to Finnish political scandals would also surely yield interesting results.

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10. Appendix

Appendix A: Full list of articles covering Al Franken's sexual harassment scandal (November 16–18, 2017)

Outlet	Headline	Date	News / Opinion
CNN	Woman says Franken groped, kissed her without consent in 2006	November 16, 2017	News
CNN	Quickly catch up on the day's news: Thursday, November 16	November 16, 2017	News
CNN	Al Franken's absolutely awful apology	November 16, 2017	Opinion
CNN	What Al Franken's Senate colleagues are saying	November 16, 2017	News
CNN	Sexual harassment is bigger than party politics	November 16, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Read Al Franken's apology following accusation of groping and kissing without consent	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	5 things for November 17: Al Franken, tax overhaul, Zimbabwe, Russia, elephants	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	Al Franken accuser: 'I've been angry about it ... for over 10 years'	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	Democrats, liberal groups are on the defensive following Franken revelations	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	There's a massive moral vacuum in the country right now	November 17, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Congress paid out \$17 million in settlements. Here's why we know so little about that money.	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	Rep. Deutch on sexual harassment allegations: 'This is a moment of reckoning'	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	Can Al Franken survive?	November 17, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Washington tells time in political bombshells	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	Liberals, don't waste your time trying to defend Franken	November 17, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Rep. Dingell says she was groped by 'prominent historical person' in the '80s	November 17, 2017	News

CNN	Should Democrats turn their backs on Bill Clinton?	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	#2020Vision: Gillibrand starts the Clinton debate; Kaine wants superdelegates eliminated; Booker gets an endorsement	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	Why did Trump attack Franken but stay quiet on Moore? Simple.	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	On Franken, Trump shouldn't have gone there	November 17, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Lawmakers push to end 'hush money' deduction in tax fight	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	Trump blasts Franken, but stays silent on Moore	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	Gillibrand: Bill Clinton should have resigned over Lewinsky affair	November 17, 2017	News
CNN	Panetta on Lewinsky affair: Bill Clinton 'more than paid the price'	November 18, 2017	News
CNN	The post-Weinstein wave of sexual misconduct charges, in one chart	November 18, 2017	News
Fox News	Flashback: Franken spoke out on Weinstein, sexual harassment	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Sen. Al Franken's complete statement on groping allegations	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Al Franken joked about raping Lesley Stahl in 1995 New York Magazine article	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Al Franken joked about raping Lesley Stahl in 1995 New York Magazine article	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Chuck Schumer on Al Franken: 'Sexual harassment is never acceptable'	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Waukesha County Democrats briefly tweet support for Al Franken's resignation	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Al Franken accused of kissing, groping LA TV host without consent	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Al Franken accuser hints at possible second victim	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Al Franken accuser accepts his apology	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Franken, Menendez & Moore and a banner day for the U.S. Senate	November 16, 2017	Opinion
Fox News	Roy Moore goes on offense against McConnell, as state party backs bid	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Two prominent Minnesota Democrats call on Al Franken to resign	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	'Unacceptable': Democrats turn on Franken over groping allegations	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Trump slams Senator 'Frankenstien' in tweets	November 16, 2017	News
Fox News	Bill Clinton should have resigned after Lewinsky affair, New York Democrat says	November 17, 2017	News
Fox News	FOX NEWS FIRST: Tax relief closer to reality as Senate panel OKs bill	November 17, 2017	News
Fox News	Clinton attack dog lashes out at Gillibrand for criticism of Bill	November 17, 2017	News
Fox News	How the left used Al Franken to bash President Trump after initially downplaying Senator's harassment	November 17, 2017	News

Fox News	Will Franken survive? Senator faces calls to resign, ethics probe, scorn of colleagues	November 17, 2017	News
Fox News	Al Franken mocked by late-night hosts for sexual misconduct allegations	November 17, 2017	News
Fox News	Hey Al Franken: No joke, you need to resign	November 17, 2017	Opinion
Fox News	A cynics' history of politicized sex scandals	November 17, 2017	Opinion
Fox News	Clinton aide: 'False comparison' to equate Bill with Weinstein, Moore	November 17, 2017	News
Fox News	GOP official in NH urges Bill Clinton's name be dropped from state Democratic dinner	November 18, 2017	News
Fox News	Moore, Franken, creepy Biden and other horrendous media fiascos	November 18, 2017	Opinion
Fox News	Congress has paid nearly \$1 million in settlements after workplace complaints this year	November 18, 2017	News
Fox News	Dem candidate apologizes after boasting of 'hayloft' romp, sex with 50 women	November 18, 2017	News
Fox News	Want sexual misconduct by men to stop -- Start by cracking down on boys' easy access to internet porn	November 18, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Al Franken Issues Apology After Accusation of Forcible Kissing and Groping	November 16, 2017	News
The New York Times	Readers React: 'Al Franken, Noooooo!'	November 16, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Right and Left React to the Accusations Against Al Franken	November 16, 2017	News
The New York Times	Franken Should Go	November 16, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Trump, a Veteran of Sexual Harassment Accusations, Scolds Franken	November 16, 2017	News
The New York Times	The Hillary Effect	November 16, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Bill Clinton Should Have Resigned Over Lewinsky Affair, Kirsten Gillibrand Says	November 16, 2017	News
The New York Times	Alabama G.O.P. Says It Stands Behind Roy Moore	November 16, 2017	News
The New York Times	In Minnesota, Outrage and Sorrow Over Al Franken Allegations	November 17, 2017	News
The New York Times	Stephen Colbert Doesn't Think Much of Al Franken's Apologies	November 17, 2017	News
The New York Times	Franken Case Sets Off Debate Over Line Between Abuse and a Mistake	November 17, 2017	News
The New York Times	In Mocking Franken Over Claims of Sexual Misconduct, Trump Joins a Debate He Started	November 17, 2017	News
The New York Times	Mitch McConnell's Middle-Class Tax Hike	November 17, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Days of Shrugging Off Sexual Misconduct at the Capitol May Be Over	November 17, 2017	News
The New York Times	Al Franken, Tesla, 'Justice League': Your Friday Briefing	November 17, 2017	News
The New York Times	North Korea, Al Franken, Leonids: Your Friday Evening Briefing	November 17, 2017	News
The New York Times	Al Franken and a 'Learning Moment'	November 17, 2017	Opinion

The New York Times	Bill Clinton, Roy Moore and the Power of Social Identity	November 17, 2017	News
The New York Times	Blue States Practice the Family Values Red States Preach	November 17, 2017	Opinion
The Wall Street Journal	Alabama Women, Say No to Roy Moore	November 16, 2017	Opinion
The Wall Street Journal	Al Franken Doesn't Get the Joke	November 16, 2017	Opinion
The Wall Street Journal	Al Franken Accused of Sexual Misconduct	November 16, 2017	News
The Wall Street Journal	How Democrat Doug Jones Will Try to Win Alabama's Senate Race Against Roy Moore	November 17, 2017	News
The Wall Street Journal	Senators' Calls for Ethics Probes Puts Focus on Secretive Panel	November 17, 2017	News
The Wall Street Journal	A Blue Slip—Not a Franken Veto	November 17, 2017	Opinion

Appendix B: Full list of articles covering Roy Moore's sexual harassment scandal (November 9–11, 2017)

Outlet	Headline	Date	News / Opinion
CNN	White House aide: 'Give Roy Moore the chance to defend himself'	November 9, 2017	News
CNN	GOP lawmakers ask Roy Moore to step aside if sexual allegations are true	November 9, 2017	News
CNN	If true, sex claims could be disqualifying for Moore, state official says	November 9, 2017	News
CNN	Republicans already had a Roy Moore problem, but it just got way, way worse	November 9, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Bannon compares Moore accusations to coverage of Trump's 'Access Hollywood' tape	November 9, 2017	News
CNN	If Democrats can win Alabama, the Senate is in play in 2018	November 9, 2017	News
CNN	We need 'extreme vetting' for toxic masculinity	November 9, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Quickly catch up on the day's news: Thursday, November 9	November 9, 2017	News
CNN	White House: If allegations against Moore are true, he should step aside	November 10, 2017	News
CNN	Will Roy Moore's troubles draw national Democrats into Alabama race?	November 10, 2017	News
CNN	Roy Moore can still win	November 10, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Alabama state official invokes Joseph and Mary to defend Roy Moore	November 10, 2017	News
CNN	Moore's brother denies charges, compares persecution to Jesus	November 10, 2017	News
CNN	This is what 44 seconds of GOP senators not responding to questions about Roy Moore sounds like	November 10, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Quickly catch up on the day's news: Friday, November 10	November 10, 2017	News
CNN	Trump's abroad but the headlines are at home	November 10, 2017	News

CNN	5 things for November 10: Roy Moore, Russia probe, Trump, tax proposal, Louis C.K.	November 10, 2017	News
CNN	NRSC severs fundraising ties with Roy Moore	November 10, 2017	News
CNN	Republicans' response to the Roy Moore story sure sounds familiar	November 10, 2017	Opinion
CNN	GOP congressman: If Roy Moore wins, Senate should expel him	November 10, 2017	News
CNN	America, I apologize for the South's hypocrisy	November 10, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Mitt Romney: Roy Moore should step aside	November 11, 2017	News
CNN	When it comes to Roy Moore, forget politics	November 11, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Psaki: 'If true' is a shameful dodge	November 11, 2017	Opinion
CNN	Roy Moore calls allegations against him 'completely false'	November 11, 2017	News
CNN	Bannon on Moore: Until more evidence, 'I'm standing with him'	November 11, 2017	News
CNN	GOP Rep. Lee Zeldin is pressed about Roy Moore allegations	November 11, 2017	News
Fox News	Trump takes it easy on China, China, China, China...	November 9, 2017	Opinion
Fox News	Roy Moore says 'forces of evil' behind report of sexual contact with 14-year-old	November 9, 2017	News
Fox News	Moore denies sexual misconduct, but GOP fears election risk	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	Louis C.K. sexual allegations ignite reaction from Hollywood	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	Bible scholars take issue with Moore's defender	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	Moore scandal raises new doubts about Bannon	November 10, 2017	Opinion
Fox News	Trump deflects on whether Moore should quit Senate race	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	Trump: Roy Moore will 'step aside' if sexual misconduct allegations are true	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	Roy Moore turmoil prompts talk of Luther Strange write-in campaign in Senate race	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	Erick Erickson: I don't blame Roy Moore voters for sticking with him	November 10, 2017	Opinion
Fox News	GOP Senate campaign arm drops out of fundraising agreement with Roy Moore	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	FOX NEWS FIRST: Trump believes Roy Moore will 'step aside' if sex allegations are true; Moore won't back down	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	Roy Moore says sexual misconduct allegations 'based on a lie'	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	Local media connect Roy Moore accuser to Democratic campaigns	November 10, 2017	News
Fox News	Trump: Putin told me face-to-face 'I didn't meddle' in elections	November 11, 2017	News
Fox News	Drawing Mary and Joseph into Moore controversy raises ire	November 11, 2017	News

Fox News	Will Alabama pick a Democrat over Moore? Suburbs will decide	November 11, 2017	News
Fox News	Roy Moore slams Washington Post's 'political agenda' as he denies sexual misconduct accusations	November 11, 2017	News
Fox News	Trump sidesteps questions on Roy Moore amid sexual misconduct allegations	November 11, 2017	News
The New York Times	Sex Allegations Against Roy Moore Send Republicans Reeling	November 9, 2017	News
The New York Times	Republican Party, China, Louis C.K.: Your Thursday Evening Briefing	November 9, 2017	News
The New York Times	Key Takeaways From Steve Bannon's Interview With The Times	November 10, 2017	News
The New York Times	Stephen Colbert Goes Easy on Louis C.K.	November 10, 2017	News
The New York Times	Steve Bannon, Louis C.K., 'Murder on the Orient Express': Your Friday Briefing	November 10, 2017	News
The New York Times	Revenge of the Obama Coalition	November 10, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	DealBook Briefing: Senators Want Answers on AT&T Negotiations	November 10, 2017	News
The New York Times	The 'If True' Cowardice	November 10, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Alabama Republicans Defend Roy Moore: 'It Was 40 Years Ago'	November 10, 2017	News
The New York Times	God Should Sue Roy Moore	November 10, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Jesus' Parents and Roy Moore's Gall	November 10, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Republicans Try to Block Moore's Path as Candidate Denies Sexual Misconduct	November 10, 2017	News
The New York Times	Roy Moore, Lebanon, Louis C.K.: Your Friday Evening Briefing	November 10, 2017	News
The New York Times	For Alabama Women, Disgust, Fatigue and a Sense Moore Could Win Anyway	November 10, 2017	News
The New York Times	Sex, Senators and — Oh Gosh, Mitt	November 10, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	The Swine of Conservatism	November 11, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Can Donald Trump Save Roy Moore After All?	November 11, 2017	Opinion
The New York Times	Roy Moore, Alabama Senate Candidate Under Siege, Tries to Discredit Accusers	November 11, 2017	News
The New York Times	Bannon Put a Target on His Back. McConnell's Answer: 'Ha-Ha.'	November 11, 2017	News
The Wall Street Journal	Trump: Moore Should Quit Race if Allegations Are True	November 10, 2017	News
The Wall Street Journal	The Morning Risk Report: Canada Banks Move to U.S.-Style Proxy Access	November 10, 2017	News
The Wall Street Journal	Confused? Here's Where the Tax Overhaul Stands	November 10, 2017	News
The Wall Street Journal	GOP Senators, Trump Say Roy Moore Should Quit Alabama Race If Sexual-Misconduct Claims Are True	November 10, 2017	News
The Wall Street Journal	Republican Feud Flares Up Over Roy Moore Sex Allegations	November 10, 2017	News
The Wall Street Journal	Bannon's Senate Minority	November 10, 2017	Opinion